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Les Miserables.

vol- II

by.

Victor Hugo

Hugo

J.M. Dent

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I.

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MASTER GORBEAU

Forty years ago, the solitary pedestrian who ventured into the unknown regions of La Salpêtrière, and went up along the Boulevard as far as the Barrière d'Italie, reached a quarter where it might be said that Paris disappeared. It was not solitude, for there were passers-by: it was not the country, for there were houses and streets; it was not a city, for the streets had ruts in them, like the high roads, and grass grew along them; and it was not a village, for the houses were too lofty. What was it then? It was an inhabited place where there was nobody, a deserted spot where there was somebody; it was a boulevard of the great city, a street of Paris, wilder, at night, than a forest, gloomier, by day, than a cemetery.

It was the old quarter of the Horse-Market.

Our pedestrian, if he trusted himself beyond the four tottering walls of the Horse-Market, if he even consented to pass the Rue

du Petit-banquier, leaving on his right a court-yard protected by high walls, then a field in which stood stacks of tan-bark, resembling gigantic beaver dams, then an enclosure encumbered with lumber and piles of logs, tree-stumps, saw-dust, and chips, from the top of which a large dog barked; then a long low wall, all in ruins, with a small, decrepit door in it, covered with moss, which was covered with flowers in the spring-time, and then, in the loneliest spot, a hideous and decrepit building, on which could be read in large letters: POST NO BILLS; this bold promenader would reach the corner of the Rue des Vignes Saint Marcel, an almost unknown latitude. There, near a manufactory, and between two garden walls, could be seen at the time of which we speak, a tumble-down house, which, at the first glance, seemed small as a cottage, yet was in reality large as a cathedral. It turned its gable end to the public thoroughfare, and hence its apparent smallness. Nearly the whole house was concealed. Only the door and one window could be seen.

This old dwelling had but one story.

On examining it, the first thing that struck one was that the door could never have been other than the door of a hovel, while the window, had it been carved in stone instead

of made of stucco, might have been the basement of a fine mansion.

The door was nothing but a collection of worm-eaten boards, clumsily held together by cross-pieces that looked like rudely split pieces of fire-wood. It opened directly on a steep staircase, with high steps covered with mud, plaster, and dust, of the same width as the door, which could be seen from the street, steep as a ladder, and disappearing in the shadow between two walls. The top of the clumsy opening in which the door stood was disguised by a thin deal plank, in the middle of which a triangular hole had been sawn, that served for both skylight and transom when the door was closed. On the inside of the door a brush dipped in ink had in a couple of strokes traced the number fifty-two, while over the transom the same brush had daubed the number fifty, which made one hesitate, and ask, where am I? The top of the door says: "This is number fifty;" the inside replies: "No, this is number fifty-two." Some sort of dust-colored rags hung like a drapery over the triangular skylight.

The window was wide, tolerably lofty, filled with large panes of glass, and protected by Venetian blinds; but these panes had various wounds, at once concealed and betrayed by an ingenious bandage of paper and the blinds,

broken and hanging from their hinges, threatened passers-by more than they protected the inhabitants. The horizontal slats were lacking here and there, and had been filled up in the most primitive way by boards nailed on perpendicularly; so that what began by being a Venetian blind, ended by being a close shutter.

This door, which looked disreputable, and this window, which looked respectable, though dilapidated, seen here on the same house, produced the effect of two ragged beggars walking along together side by side with different mien under the same rags, the one having always been a mendicant, while the other had once been a gentleman.

The staircase led to a very spacious interior, which looked like a barn converted into a house. This structure had, as its intestinal tube, a long passage, on which there opened, on either side, compartments of various dimensions, habitable at a pinch, and more like booths than cells. These rooms looked out on the dreary landscape around.

Altogether, it was dark, wearisome, dull, melancholy, and sepulchral; and it was penetrated, according as the cracks were in the roof or the door, by cold sunbeams or sharp draughts. An interesting and picturesque peculiarity of houses of this description is the enormous size of the spiders.

To the left of the main door, on the boulevard, a small window that had been walled up, about the height of a man from the ground, formed a square niche which was filled with stones that passing urchins had thrown into it.

A portion of this building has been recently demolished, but what still remains will convey an idea of what it was. The structure, taken as a whole, is not more than a century old. A hundred years is youth to a church but old age to a human abode. It would seem that the dwelling of man partakes of his brief existence, and the dwelling of God of His eternity.

The letter-carriers called this house number fifty and fifty-two, but it was known in the quarter as the Gorbeau house.

Let us see how it came by this title.

The "gatherers-up of unconsidered trifles," who collect anecdotes as the herbalist his simples, and prick fleeting dates upon their memory with a pin, know that there were in Paris, in the last century, about 1770, two attorneys of the Châtelet, one named Corbeau, and the other Renard—two names foreseen by Lafontaine. The opportunity was too good for the lawyers' clerks to neglect having a laugh at their expense. So very soon the galleries of the court-rooms

rang with the following parody, in rather halting verse:

"*Mâitre Corbeau, sur un dossier perchè,*
Tenait dans son bec une saisie exécutoire;
Mâitre Renard, par l'odeur allèchè,
Lui fit à peu près cette histoire:
Eh, bonjour, &c."

"Master Crow, on a document perched,
In his beak held a fat execution;
Master Fox, with his jaws well besmirched,
Thus spoke up, to his neighbor's confusion:
'Good-day, my fine fellow!' quoth he, etc."

The two honest practitioners, annoyed and disconcerted by the roars of laughter that followed them, resolved to change their names, and for that purpose appealed to the king. The petition was handed to Louis XV, on the very day on which the Papal Nuncio, and Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon, in the presence of his majesty, devoutly kneeling, one on each side of Madame Du Barry, put her slippers on her naked feet as she was getting out of bed. The King, who was laughing, continued his laugh; gayly passing from the two bishops to the two lawyers, and absolved these limbs of the law from their names, or nearly so. By royal authority Master Corbeau was allowed to add a tail to his initial letter and call himself Gorbeau; Master Renard was less fortunate,—he could only obtain leave to

place a P before his R, and call himself Prenard [a grasping fellow], so that the latter name was nearly as significant as the first.

Now, according to local tradition, this Master Gorbeau was the proprietor of the building numbered fifty and fifty-two, Boulevard de l'Hôpital. He was even the originator of the monumental window.

Hence the name, for this old dwelling, of the Gorbeau house.

Opposite number fifty and fifty-two there stands, amid the boulevard trees, a tall elm, three-quarters dead; almost directly in front opens the Rue de la Barrière des Gobelins, a street at that time without houses, unpaved, planted with badly-growing trees, grass-grown or muddy, according to the season, and running straight down to the city walls. An odor of copperas ascended in puffs from the roof of a neighboring factory.

The barrier was close by. In 1823 the city walls were still in existence.

This barrier itself filled the mind with gloomy images. It was on the way to the Bicêtre. It was there that under the empire and the Restoration condemned criminals reentered Paris on the day of their execution. It was there that, about the year 1829, was committed that mysterious assassination called "the murder of the Barrière de Fontaine-

bleau," the perpetrators of which the authorities have never discovered—a frightful problem which has never been elucidated, a mournful enigma which has never been solved. A few steps farther on you come to that fatal Rue Croulebarbe, where Ulbach stabbed the goat-herd girl of Ivry to the sound of thunder, as in a melodrama. A few more steps and you come to those detestable, lopped-off elms of the Barrière Saint Jacques, that expedient of philanthropists to hide the scaffold, that paltry, disgraceful Place de Greve of a shop-keeping society, which recoiled before capital punishment, yet not daring either to abolish it with grandeur nor to maintain it with firmness.

Thirty-seven years ago, leaving aside this place, Saint Jacques, which was, as it were, predestined, and has always been horrible, the gloomiest spot perhaps of all this gloomy boulevard was the place, still so unattractive, where stood the old building fifty and fifty-two.

City dwellings did not begin to start up there till five-and-twenty years later. The place was repulsive. In addition to the melancholy thoughts that took possession of you there, you felt conscious of being between La Salpêtrière, whose dome was just visible, and Bicêtre, whose barrier was close by; that is to say, between the folly of woman and the folly

of man. As far as the eye could reach nothing was visible save the slaughter-houses, the city wall, and few and far between, some frontages of foundries, resembling barracks, or monasteries. Everywhere were sheds and rubbish, old walls black as coffins, new walls white as winding-sheets; everywhere parallel rows of trees, buildings standing in rows, flat structures, long cold perspectives, and the gloomy sadness of right angles. Not a variation of the soil, not a caprice of architecture, not a curve. Taken altogether it was freezing, regular, and hideous. Nothing stifles the heart like symmetry. Symmetry is ennui, and ennui is the very essence of mourning, a yawning despair. It is possible to imagine something more horrible than a hell of suffering; it is a hell of ennui. Were such a hell in existence, this section of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital might have been its avenue.

At nightfall, at the moment when light disappears, above all in winter, at the hour when the evening breeze is tearing from the elms their last rusty leaves; when the darkness is profound and starless, or when the moon and the wind make rents in the clouds, this boulevard became suddenly terrifying. The black outlines became dim, and were even lost in the obscurity, like fragments of the infinite. The passer-by could not help thinking of the

countless bloody traditions of the spot. This solitude, in which so many crimes had been committed, had something awful about it. One could almost foresee snares in this obscurity, all the confused shapes of the darkness appeared suspicious, and the long, hollow squares to be seen between the trees seemed like graves. By day it was ugly, in the evening it was dismal; by night it was ominous.

In summer, in the twilight, a few old women might be seen here and there sitting under the elms on benches made mouldy by the rain. These worthy old dames were addicted to begging. This quarter, however, which looked more superannuated than ancient, from that time began to undergo a transformation. Thenceforth, whoever would see must hasten. Each day some detail disappeared. For the last twenty years, as well as now, the Orleans railway station has been just outside the old faubourg, and keeps it moving. Where a railroad-dépôt is located on the outskirts of a capital it is the death of a suburb and the birth of a town. It would seem as though around these great centres of the activity of nations, at the rumbling of these mighty machines, under the breath of these monstrous horses of civilization, which devour coal and snort fire, the earth teeming with germs of life, trembles, and opens to swallow

up the old abodes of men and bring forth new ones. The old houses crumble away, and new ones rise in their place.

From the day when the Orleans railway station invaded the grounds of the Salpêtrière, the old narrow streets that border the Jardin des Plantes have been giving way, violently traversed, as they are, three or four times a day by those streams of diligences, hacks, and omnibuses, which, in course of time, push back the houses on both sides: for, there are things that sound strangely, and yet are perfectly true, just as the fact remains that in large capitals the sun causes the fronts of houses looking south to vegetate and grow, so is it undeniable that the frequent passage of vehicles widens streets. The symptoms of a new life are evident. In the remotest corners of this old provincial district pavement is beginning to appear, side-walks are springing up and stretching to longer and longer distances, even in those parts where there are as yet no wayfarers. One morning, a memorable morning in July, 1845, the bitumen cauldrons were suddenly seen smoking there; on that day it could be said that civilization had reached the Rue de l'Ourcine, and that Paris stepped across into the Faubourg Saint Marceau.

II.

A NEST FOR AN OWL AND A LINNET

It was in front of this old Gorbeau house that Jean Valjean stopped. Like the birds of prey, he had chosen this deserted spot to make his nest.

He fumbled in his waistcoat pocket, took from it a sort of pass-key, opened the door, entered, then carefully closed it again, and went up stairs, still carrying Cosette.

At the top of the stair-way he took from his pocket another key, with which he opened another door. The room he entered and closed again immediately was a sort of spacious garret, furnished with a mattress laid on the ground, a table, and a few chairs. A stove containing a fire, the coals of which were visible, stood in one corner. The street lamp of the boulevard faintly illumined this poor interior. At the end of the room was a closet containing a cot-bed, to which Jean Valjean carried the child and laid her on it, without waking her.

He struck a light and lit a candle, which stood ready beforehand on the table, and, as he had done on the preceding evening, he began to gaze at Cosette with a look of ecstasy, in which the expression of kindness and tenderness almost attained delirium. The little girl, with that calm confidence which only appertains to extreme strength and extreme weakness, had fallen asleep without knowing with whom she was, and continued to slumber without knowing where she was.

Jean Valjean bent down and kissed the child's hand.

Nine months before he had kissed the hand of the mother, who, also, had just fallen asleep.

The same mournful, religious, poignant feeling now filled his heart.

He knelt down by the bedside of Cosette.

Long after daybreak the child was still asleep. A pale ray of December sun filtered through the garret window and made large streaks of light and shadow on the ceiling. Suddenly a heavily-laden wagon, passing along the boulevard, shook the old building like the blast of a tempest, and made it tremble from top to bottom.

"Yes! madame!" cried Cosette, waking with a start, "here I am! here I am!"

And she jumped out of bed, her eyelids

still half closed by the weight of sleep, stretching out her hand towards the corner of the wall.

"Oh, where is it? my broom!" said she.

By this time her eyes were fully open, and she saw the smiling face of Jean Valjean.

"Well, now! it is true," said the child. "Good-morning, monsieur!"

Children accept at once and familiarly joy and happiness, being themselves naturally all happiness and joy.

Cosette saw Catherine at the foot of her bed, caught her up, and while playing, asked Jean Valjean a hundred questions: "Where was she? if it were big Paris? if Madame Thénardier were really a long way off? if she would not come back?" etc., etc., etc. All at once she exclaimed, "How pretty it is here!"

It was a frightful hole, but she felt herself free.

"Shall I sweep?" she at length continued.

"Play," said Jean Valjean.

The day passed in this way. Cosette, not feeling any anxiety at understanding nothing, was inexpressibly happy with her doll and this good man.

III.

TWO MISFORTUNES MINGLED MAKE HAPPINESS

The next morning at dawn found Jean Valjean again by Cosette's bedside. He waited there, motionless, to see her awake.

Something new was entering his soul.

Jean Valjean had never loved any thing. For twenty-five years he had been alone in the world. He had never been a father, lover, husband, or friend. At the galleys he was cross, sullen, chaste, ignorant, and untamed—the heart of the old convict was full of freshness. His sister and his sister's children had left in his memory only a vague and distant reminiscence, which in the end entirely faded away. He had made every exertion to find them again, and, not being able to do so, forgot them—human nature is thus constituted. The other tender emotions of his youth, if he had any, were lost in an abyss.

When he saw Cosette, when he had taken her, carried her away, and rescued her, he felt his heart moved. All that he had of feeling

and affection was aroused and rushed towards this child. He would go up to the bed on which she slept, and would tremble with joy; he felt pangs like a mother, and knew not what they were; for it is something very incomprehensible and very sweet, this grand and strange emotion of a heart in its first love.

Poor old heart, so young!

But, as he was fifty-five, and Cosette eight, all the love he might have felt during life was melted into a species of ineffable radiance.

This was the second white vision he had seen. The bishop had caused the dawn of virtue to rise on his horizon; Cosette evoked that of love.

The first days passed in this rapture.

On her part, Cosette, too, unconsciously underwent a change, poor little creature! She was so little when her mother left her that she could no longer remember her. Like all children, who resemble young vine-twigs that cling to everything, she had tried to love. She had not succeeded. Everybody had repulsed her,—the Thénardiers, their children, other children. She had loved the dog; it died, and after that nothing and nobody would have anything to do with her. It is a sad thing to tell, something we have already hinted at, but at the age of eight her heart was cold. It was not her fault, it was not the faculty of

loving that she lacked; alas! it was, the possibility. And so, from the first day, all that felt and thought within her began to love this good man. She experienced sensations never before known to her—feelings of budding, and growth.

Her friend no longer even seemed to her old or poor. In her eyes Jean Valjean was handsome, just as the garret had seemed pretty. Such are the effects of the aurora of childhood, youth, and joy. The newness of earth and of life has something to do with it. Nothing is so charming as the ruddy reflection of happiness in an attic. We all have, somewhere in our past, a rose-colored sky-parlor.

Nature had placed a wide chasm—an interval of fifty years, between Jean Valjean and Cosette. This chasm, fate filled up. Destiny suddenly united, and affianced with its irresistible power, these two uprooted lives, dissimilar in age, similar in sorrow. The one, in fact, was the complement of the other. Cosette instinctively sought a father, in the same way as Jean Valjean instinctively sought a child. To meet was to find one another. At the mysterious moment when their two hands clasped they were welded together. When their two souls saw each other they recognized that each was necessary to the other, and joined in a close embrace.

Taking the words in their most comprehensive and absolute meaning, we may say that, separated from everything by the walls of the tombs, Jean Valjean was the widower as Cosette was the orphan. This position made Jean Valjean become, in a celestial sense, the father of Cosette.

And, in truth, the mysterious impression produced upon Cosette in the depths of the woods at Chelles by Jean Valjean's hand grasping hers in the darkness, was not an illusion but a reality. The coming of this man, in its influence on the destiny of this child, had been as the advent of God.

Moreover, Jean Valjean had well chosen his retreat. He seemed to be in almost perfect security.

The room with the closet, which he occupied with Cosette, was the one whose window looked out upon the boulevard. This window being the only one on that side of the house, there was no fear of the curiosity of neighbors, either from that side or opposite.

The ground-floor of number fifty and fifty-two, a sort of rickety shed, was used by market-gardeners as a place to leave their carts and had no communication with the second floor. It was separated from it by flooring that had neither stairway nor trap-door and was, as it were, the diaphragm of the old building. The

upper floor contained, as we have said, several rooms, and a few lofts, only one of which was occupied, by the old woman who did the chamber-work for Jean Valjean.

It was this old woman, honored by the title of chief lodger, but who in reality performed the duties of portress, who had rented him this lodging on Christmas day. He had represented himself as a man of means ruined by the Spanish bonds, who was going to live there with his grand-daughter. He paid six months' rent in advance, and engaged the old woman to furnish the room and the adjoining closet, as we have seen. It was this woman who had kindled the fire in the stove and prepared everything on the evening of their arrival.

Weeks passed away. These two beings led a happy life in this wretched garret.

From earliest dawn Cosette laughed, chattered, and sang. Children, like birds, have their morning song.

Sometimes it happened that Jean Valjean would take her little red chilblained hand and kiss it. The poor child, accustomed to being beaten, did not know what this meant, and would run off quite ashamed.

At times she was serious, and looked at her little black frock. Cosette was no longer dressed in rags, but in mourning. She was

issuing from wretched poverty, and was entering life.

Jean Valjean set to work teaching her to read. At times, while teaching the child to spell, he would remember that it was with the idea of doing evil that he learned to read at the galleys. This intention had now turned to teaching a child to read. Then the old convict would smile the pensive smile of angels.

He felt in it a pre-ordination from on high, a volition of some one more than a man, and he would lose himself in a reverie. Good thoughts, as well as bad, have their depths.

Teaching Cosette to read, and watching her play, made up about all Jean Valjean's life. And then, he would talk to her about her mother, and teach her to pray.

She called him "Father," and knew him by no other name.

He spent hours in watching her dress and undress her doll, and listening to her prattle. From this moment life appeared to him full of interest; men seemed good and just; he no longer reproached any one in his thoughts, he saw no reason, now, why he should not live to a great age, since this child loved him. He looked forward to a long future illumined by Cosette, as by a charming light. The very best of us are not exempt from some selfish thought. He said to himself at times,

with a sort of pleasure, that she would be homely.

Although it is only a personal opinion, we fancy that at the point which Jean Valjean had reached when he began to love Cosette, he required this fresh impulse to continue in the right path. He had seen, under new aspects, the wickedness of men and the wretchedness of society, but the aspects were incomplete, and, unfortunately, showed him only one side of the truth,—the lot of woman summed up in Fantine, and public authority personified in Javert; he had been sent back to the galleys, this time for doing good; he had drunk the new cup of bitterness to the dregs; disgust and weariness seized upon him; the very recollection of the bishop was perhaps almost eclipsed, but only to reappear afterwards luminous and triumphant; still, this blessed remembrance was beginning to fade. Who knows if Jean Valjean was not on the point of becoming discouraged and falling backward? Love came, and he again became strong. Alas! he was no less feeble than Cosette. He protected her and she strengthened him. Thanks to him, she was able to advance in her life; thanks to her, he could continue in the path of virtue. He was the support of this child, and this child was his prop. Oh, unfathomable and divine mystery of the coördinations of Destiny!

IV.

WHAT WAS NOTICED BY THE CHIEF LODGER

Jean Valjean was prudent enough never to go out in the day-time. Every evening, however, about twilight, he walked out for an hour or two, sometimes alone, often with Cosette, selecting the most unfrequented side-alleys of the boulevards, and going into the churches at nightfall. He was fond of going to Saint Médard, which is the nearest church. When he did not take Cosette, she remained with the old woman, but it was the child's delight to go with her old friend. She preferred an hour with him even to her delicious *têtes-à-têtes* with Catherine. He would walk along holding her by the hand, and telling her pleasant things.

It turned out that Cosette was very gay.

The old woman cleaned, cooked, and bought food for them.

They lived frugally, always having a little fire, but like people in embarrassed circumstances. Jean Valjean had made no change in the furniture since the first day, except that

he had a wooden door put up in place of the glass door in Cosette's sleeping closet.

He still wore his yellow coat, his black pantaloons, and his old hat. On the street he was taken for a beggar. It sometimes happened that old ladies would turn back and give him a sou. Jean Valjean accepted the sou and bowed humbly. It chanced, sometimes, also, that he would meet some wretched creature asking for charity; and then, looking about him to be sure that no one was watching, he would furtively approach the beggar, slip a piece of money, often silver, into his hand, and hurry away. This entailed inconveniences. He began to be known in the quarter, as *the beggar who gives alms*. The old *chief lodger*, a spiteful creature, full of envy and uncharitableness toward her neighbors, watched Jean Valjean closely, though he did not suspect it. She was rather deaf, which made her talkative, and there remained to her from the past two teeth, one in the upper and one in the lower jaw, which she constantly rattled together. She had questioned Cosette, who, knowing nothing, could tell nothing, further than that she came from Montfermeil. One morning this old female spy saw Jean Valjean go into one of the uninhabited rooms of the building, in a way that seemed peculiar to the old busy-body. She followed him with the

stealthy step of an old cat, and was able to watch him, herself unseen, through the crack of a door close by. Jean Valjean had, doubtless, for greater precaution, turned his back to this door. The old woman saw him fumble in his pocket and take from it a needle case, scissors, and thread, and then proceed to rip up the lining of one of his coat-tails, and pull out a piece of yellowish paper, which he unfolded. The old woman saw with horror that it was a thousand-franc note. It was only the second or third she had ever seen in her life. She fled in terror.

A moment afterwards Jean Valjean accosted her, and asked her to get this thousand-franc bill changed for him, adding that it was his half-yearly dividend, which he had received on the previous day. "Where?" thought the old woman; "he did not go out until six in the evening, and the bank is certainly not open at that hour." The old woman went and changed the note, making her conjectures the while. This bill of a thousand francs, commented upon and multiplied, gave rise to a host of breathless conferences among the gossips of the Rue des Vignes-Saint-Marcel.

A few days after it happened that Jean Valjean, in his shirt-sleeves, was sawing wood in the passage. The old woman was in his room cleaning up. She was alone. Cosette was

admiring the wood he was sawing. The old woman saw the coat hanging on a nail, and examined it. The lining had been sewn up again. The good woman felt it carefully, and thought she could detect in the lapels and facings, thicknesses of paper. More thousand-franc notes beyond a doubt!

She also noticed that there were all sorts of things in the pockets. Not only were there the needles, scissors, and thread she had already seen, but a large pocket-book, a big clasp knife, and, most suspicious fact of all, several different colored wigs. Every pocket of this coat seemed to be a species of safe-guard against unexpected events.

Thus, the occupants of the old house reached the last days of winter.

V.

A FIVE-FRANC PIECE FALLING ON THE FLOOR MAKES A NOISE

There was in the neighborhood of Saint Médard a mendicant who sat crouching over the edge of a condemned well, and to whom Jean Valjean liked to give alms. He never passed this man without giving him a few sous. Sometimes he spoke to him. Persons who were envious of this beggar said that he was in the pay of the police. He was an old church beadle, seventy-five years of age, who was constantly telling his beads.

One evening, as Jean Valjean passed that way, Cosette was not with him, he noticed the beggar sitting in his usual place under the lamp which had just been lighted. The man, according to his habit, seemed to be praying and was bent over. Jean Valjean went up to him and put a piece of money in his hand as usual. The beggar suddenly raised his eyes, looked fixedly at Jean Valjean, then quickly dropped his head. This movement was like a flash. Jean Valjean gave a start. It seemed

to him he had just seen by the flickering light of the lamp, not the placid and devout face of the old beadle, but a terrible and well-known countenance. He experienced the sensation one would have on finding oneself suddenly face to face with a tiger in the darkness. He recoiled, terrified and petrified, not daring to breathe, nor to speak, to stay or to fly, staring at the beggar, who had let fall his head, with its tattered covering and did not appear to be conscious any longer of his presence. At this strange moment, an instinct, perhaps the mysterious instinct of self-preservation, prevented Jean Valjean from uttering a word. The beggar had the same form, the same rags, the same general appearance as on every other day. "Bah!" thought Jean Valjean, "I am mad! I am dreaming! it is impossible!" And he went home greatly troubled.

He scarcely dared confess, even to himself, that the face which he fancied he had seen was that of Javert.

That night, upon reflection, he regretted that he had not spoken to the man, so as to compel him to raise his head a second time. The next day, at nightfall, he again went thither. The beggar was in his place. "Good-day, my man," said Jean Valjean resolutely, as he gave him a sou. The beggar

raised his head, and replied in a whining tone: "Thank you, my good gentleman." It was indeed, only the old beadle.

Jean Valjean felt fully reassured. He even began to laugh. "What the deuce got into me, to be thinking that I saw Javert?" thought he. "Well, now! am I losing my sight?" and he thought no more about it.

A few days later, about eight in the evening, he was in his room, making Cosette spell out loud, when he heard the house door open and then close again. This appeared to him singular, for the old woman, who alone lived in the house beside himself, always went to bed at nightfall to save candle. Jean Valjean made Cosette a sign to be silent. He heard some one coming up the stairs. After all, it might be the old woman, who had felt unwell, and had been to the druggist's. Jean Valjean listened.

The footstep was heavy and sounded like a man's, but the old woman wore heavy shoes, and nothing so closely resembles a man's footstep as an old woman's. For all that, though, Jean Valjean blew out his candle.

He sent Cosette to bed, saying to her in a low tone: "Lie down very quietly;" and while he was kissing her forehead the footsteps stopped.

Jean Valjean remained silent and motion-

less, his back turned to the door, still seated on his chair, from which he had not moved, and holding his breath in the darkness.

After a long interval, hearing nothing more, he turned noiselessly, and, as he raised his eyes towards the door of his room, he saw a light through the key-hole. This ray of light was like an evil star in the blackness of the door and the wall. There was evidently some one there holding a candle in his hand and listening.

A few minutes passed, and then the light went away. Only, he heard no sound of footsteps, which seemed to indicate that whoever was listening at the door had taken off his shoes.

Jean Valjean threw himself on his bed without undressing, but could not close his eyes all night.

At daybreak, just as he was falling asleep through fatigue, he was aroused by the creaking of a door which opened into some garret at the end of the hall, and then he heard the same footstep which had ascended the stairs on the preceding night. The step drew nearer. He slid from his bed and put his eye to the key-hole, which was rather large, in the hope of seeing the person, whoever it might be, who had made his way into the building in the night-time, and had listened at his door. It was indeed a man, who this time passed Jean

Valjean's door without stopping. The hall was still too dark for him to distinguish his face; but when the man reached the stairs a ray of light from outside fell upon him and made his figure stand out like a profile, and Jean Valjean saw his back perfectly. The man was tall, dressed in a long coat, with a cudgel under his arm. It was the redoubtable form of Javert.

Jean Valjean might have tried to get another look at him through his window on the boulevard, but for that purpose he must have opened it, and that he dared not do.

It was evident that this man came in with a key, as if quite at home. Who had given him this key? what did it mean?

At seven in the morning, when the old woman came to clean up, Jean Valjean gave her a piercing glance, but did not question her. The good dame appeared as usual.

While she was sweeping she said to him,

"Perhaps, monsieur heard some one come in last night?"

At her age, and on that boulevard, eight in the evening is the blackest night.

"Ah, yes! by the way, I did," he answered in the most natural tone. "Who was it?"

"It's a new lodger," said the old woman, "who has come into the house."

"And his name is —— ?"

"I can't remember now: Dumont or Daumont,—some such name as that."

"And what is he—this Monsieur Daumont?"

The old woman looked at him with her little ferret eyes, and answered,—

"A gentleman living on his income, like yourself."

Perhaps she meant nothing, but Jean Valjean fancied that he could detect a meaning.

When the old woman was gone, he made a roll of some hundred francs he had in a drawer, and put it in his pocket. Notwithstanding the precautions he took to keep the money from rattling, a five-franc piece fell from his hand and rolled noisily on the floor.

At dusk he went down stairs, and looked carefully up and down the boulevard. No one was to be seen. The boulevard seemed utterly deserted. It is true that some one might have been concealed behind the trees.

He went up stairs again.

"Come!" said he to Cosette.

He took her by the hand and they both went out.

BOOK FIVE

A DARK CHASE NEEDS A SILENT PACK

I.

THE ZIGZAGS OF STRATEGY

In order to understand the pages immediately following, and others, also, which will be found farther on, an observation is here necessary.

It is now many years since the author of this book, who is compelled reluctantly to speak of himself, has been in Paris. Since he left it, Paris has been transformed. A new city has sprung up, which is, to some extent, unknown to him. He need not say that he loves Paris; Paris is his mental birthplace. Owing to demolitions and rebuilding, the Paris of his youth, that Paris which he religiously treasures in his memory, is at this hour a Paris of the past. Permit him, then, to speak of that Paris as if it still existed. It is possible that where the author purposes to lead the reader, saying, "In such a street there is such a house," there is now no longer either house or street. If the reader will take the trouble it can be verified. As for him, he

does not know new Paris, and writes with old Paris before his eyes in an illusion which is precious to him. It is sweet to him to fancy that something still remains of what he saw when he was in his own country, and that all has not faded away. So long as we go and come in our native land we imagine that these streets are matters of indifference to us, that these windows, these roofs and these doors are nothing to us, that these walls are strangers to us, that these trees are no more than other trees, that these houses, which we never enter, are useless to us, that this pavement on which we walk is nothing but stone. In after times, when we are there no longer, we perceive that these streets are very dear, that we miss those roofs, those windows, and those doors, that those walls are necessary to us, that those trees are the beloved of our hearts, that those houses, which we never entered, we entered daily, and that we have left some of our affections, our blood, and our heart in those streets. All these places which we no longer see, which perhaps we shall never see again, but the image of which we still retain, assume a melancholy charm, return to us with the sadness of an apparition, make the holy land visible to us, and are, so to speak, the very form of France: and we love and evoke them, such as they are, such as they were, obstinately

refusing to make any change in them, for we cling to the form of our country, as we do to the countenance of our mother.

Let us be permitted, then, to speak of the past in the present. Saying which, we beg the reader to bear this in mind, and we proceed.

Jean Valjean at once left the boulevard and began to thread the streets, making as many turnings as he could, and at times retracing his steps to make sure that he was not followed.

This manœuvre is peculiar to the tracked deer. On ground where tracks can be seen it possesses, among other advantages, that of deceiving huntsmen and dogs by false scent. In venery it is called a "false reimbushment."

The moon was full. Jean Valjean was not sorry for that. The luminary, still close to the horizon, formed large patches of light and shade in the streets. Jean Valjean could glide along by the houses and walls on the dark side and watch the bright side. He did not perhaps realize sufficiently that the dark side escaped his notice. Still, in all the deserted lanes in the neighborhood of the Rue de Polivеau he felt sure that no one was following him.

Cosette walked on without asking questions. The sufferings of the first six years of her life had made her nature rather passive. Moreover—and this is a remark to which we shall

have to revert more than once—she had become accustomed, without knowing precisely how, to the peculiarities of her good friend, and to the eccentricities of destiny. And, then, she felt herself safe being with him.

Jean Valjean knew no more than Cosette where he was going. He trusted in God, as she trusted in him. It seemed to him that he also was led by the hand by some one greater than himself; he thought he felt an invisible being guiding him. Besides, he had no settled idea, plan or scheme. He was not even absolutely certain that it was Javert; and then again it might be Javert, and Javert not know that he was Jean Valjean. Was he not disguised? Was he not supposed to be dead? Still, during the last few days several things had happened which were singular. He wanted no more. He was resolved not to return to the Gorbeau house. Like the animal driven from its lair, he sought a hole in which to hide himself until he could find a lodging.

Jean Valjean described many and varied labyrinths in the Mouffetard quarter, which was already as fast asleep as if it were still under mediæval discipline and the yoke of the Curfew; he combined, in a clever strategic system, the Rue Ceusier and the Rue Copeau, the Rue du Battoir-Saint-Victor and the Rue du Puits-l'Ermite. There were lodgings along

there, but he did not enter them, not finding what suited him. One thing, for instance, he did not doubt: that if, perchance, any persons were on his trail, they had lost it again.

As the clock of Saint Etienne du Mont struck eleven he crossed the Rue de Pontoise in front of the office of the Commissary of Police, which is at number fourteen. Some moments after, the instinct, to which we have referred, made him look round. He at that moment distinctly saw—thanks to the commissary's lamp which revealed them—three men, following him rather closely, pass in turn under this lamp on the dark side of the street. One of these men turned up the path that led to the commissary's house. The one who was in front appeared to him decidedly suspicious.

"Come, child," said he to Cosette, and he hastened out of the Rue de Pontoise.

He made a circuit, skirted the Passage des Patriarches, which was closed on account of the lateness of the hour, walked rapidly through the Rue de l'Epée-de-Bois and the Rue de l'Arbalète, and plunged into the Rue des Postes.

There was a square there, where the Rollin college now stands, and where the Rue Neuve-Saint-Geneviève branches off.

(We need hardly say that the Rue Neuve-

Saint-Geneviève is an old street, and that a post-chaise did not pass along the Rue des Postes once in ten years. This Rue des Postes was inhabited by potters in the thirteenth century, and its true name is Rue des Pots.)

The moon lighted up this square brightly. Jean Valjean concealed himself in a doorway, calculating that if these men were still following him he could not fail to have a good look at them as they crossed this lighted space.

In fact, three minutes had not elapsed when the men appeared. There were now four of them; all tall, dressed in long brown coats, with round hats, and great clubs in their hands. Their size and their huge fists, were not more alarming than their stealthy tread in the darkness. They looked like four spectres in citizen's dress.

They stopped in the centre of the square, and formed a group as if consulting. They appeared undecided. The man who seemed to be the leader turned and pointed energetically with his right hand in the direction Jean Valjean had taken, while another seemed to be pointing with some degree of obstinacy in the opposite direction. At the moment when the first man turned, the moon shone full on his face. Jean Valjean recognized Javert perfectly.

II.

IT IS FORTUNATE THAT VEHICLES CAN CROSS THE BRIDGE OF AUSTERLITZ

Uncertainty was at an end for Jean Valjean; fortunately, it still lasted with these men. He took advantage of their hesitation; it was time lost for them, gained for him. He came out from beneath the doorway where he was concealed, and made his way into the Rue des Postes towards the region of the Jardin des Plantes. Cosette began to be tired; he took her in his arms and carried her. There was no one in the streets, and the lamps had not been lighted on account of the moon.

He doubled his pace.

In a few strides he reached the Goblet pottery, on the front of which the old inscription was distinctly legible in the light of the moon:

"*Du Goblet fils c'est ici la fabrique :*
Venez choisir des cruches et des brocs :
Des pots à fleurs, des tuyaux, de la brique,
A tout venant le Cœur vend des Carreaux."

("This is the factory of Goblet, junior—
Come and select both pitchers and jugs,
Flower-pots, tiles and diverse bricks—
Each who comes shall have his share.")

He passed through the Rue de la Clef, then by the fountain of Saint Victor, along by the Jardin des Plantes, and reached the quay. There he looked around. The quay was deserted. The streets were deserted. There was no one behind him. He took breath.

He reached the Austerlitz bridge.

It was still a toll-bridge at the time.

He stepped to the toll-house and handed in a sou.

"It is two sous," said the toll-keeper; "you are carrying a child who can walk. Pay for two."

He paid, annoyed that his passing had given rise to any remark. All flight must be a gliding.

A heavy cart was going over the Seine at the same time as himself, and also proceeding to the right bank. This was useful to him. He could cross the whole of the bridge in its shadow. About the middle of the bridge,

Cosette, whose feet were numbed, asked to walk. He put her down and took her by the hand again.

After crossing the bridge, he saw a little to his right some wood-yards. He walked towards them. In order to reach them he must venture across a rather large and light open space. He did not hesitate. Those who followed him were evidently thrown off his track, and Jean Valjean believed himself out of danger. Sought for, he might be, but followed he was not.

A little street, the Rue du Chemin Vert Saint Antoine, ran between two wood-yards enclosed by walls. This street was narrow, dark and seemed made expressly for him. Before entering it he looked back.

From the spot where he was, he could see the whole length of the bridge of Austerlitz.

Four shadows had just entered upon the bridge.

These shadows were turning their backs on the Jardin des Plantes, and were coming towards the right bank.

These four shadows were the four men.

A shudder went over Jean Valjean, like that over a recaptured animal.

One hope was left him; it was that these men had not entered upon the bridge and had not perceived him when he crossed the

large illumined space holding Cosette by the hand.

In that case, by plunging into the little street in front of him, if he could reach the timber-yards, kitchen-gardens, fields, and land not yet built on, he might escape.

It seemed to him that he could trust himself to this little silent street. He entered it.

OF THE ASIATIC SOC

III.

CONSULT THE PLAN OF PARIS IN 1727

After some three hundred paces, he came to a spot where the street forked. It divided into two streets, the one turning off obliquely to the left, the other to the right. Jean Valjean had before him, as it were, the two branches of a Y. Which should he choose?

He did not hesitate, but took the right.

Why?

Because the left branch ran towards the faubourg,—that is to say, towards the inhabited region, while the right branch went in the direction of the country, that is, towards the uninhabited region.

But now, they no longer walked very fast. Cosette's step slackened Jean Valjean's pace.

He took her up and carried her again. Cosette laid her head upon the good man's shoulder and did not say a word.

He looked back from time to time, while careful to keep on the dark side of the street.

The street was straight behind him. The first twice or thrice that he turned he saw nothing, the silence was profound, and he kept on his way somewhat re-assured. Suddenly, on turning again, he fancied he saw something moving on the dark part of the street which he had just passed.

He plunged forward rather than walked, hoping to find some side lane by which he could escape, and once more break his trail.

He came to a wall.

This wall, however, did not prevent him from going farther; it was a wall bordering a cross street, into which ran the street Jean Valjean had entered.

Here again he must decide. Should he take the right or the left?

He looked to the right. The lane ran for some distance between buildings, which were barns or sheds, and then terminated abruptly. The end of the blind alley, a tall white wall, was distinctly visible.

He looked to the left. On this side the land was open, and about two hundred paces farther on, ran into a street, of which it was an affluent. In this direction lay safety.

The instant Jean Valjean decided to turn to the left, to reach the street which was at the end of the lane, he perceived, at the corner of the lane and the street towards which he

was going, a sort of black and motionless statue.

It was some one, a man, who had just been posted there to prevent him passing.

Jean Valjean fell back.

This part of Paris where Jean Valjean was, situated between the Faubourg Saint Antoine and la Rapée, is one of those which have been utterly transformed by recent works, which some consider disfiguring, others beautifying. The fields, the wood-yards, and the old buildings are gone. There are now broad, new, wide streets, arenas, circuses, hippodromes, railway stations, and a prison, Mazas,—progress, as we see, with its corrective.

Half a century ago, in the common, popular language, made up of traditions, which insists on calling the Institute "The Four Nations," and the Opera Comique "Feydeau," the precise spot where Jean Valjean now stood was called "le Petit-Picpus." The Porte Saint Jacques, the Porte Paris, the Barrière des Sergents, the Porcherons, the Galiote, the Celestins, the Capucins, the Mail, the Bourbe, the tree of Cracow, le Petite Pologne, and le Petit-Picpus, are names of old Paris, swimming on the surface of the new. The memory of the people floats on the flotsam of the past.

Le Petit-Picpus, which, by the way, scarcely existed, and was never more than a mere out-

line of a quarter, had almost the monastic look of a Spanish town. The road-ways were scantily paved, the streets were but little built up. With the exception of the two or three streets, of which we are about to speak, there was nothing but wall and solitude. Not a shop, not a vehicle, hardly a light here and there in the windows; every light put out by ten o'clock. Gardens, convents, wood-yards, market-gardens; a few low houses and great walls as high as the houses.

Such was the quarter in the last century. The Revolution had already put its nose out of joint. The republican authorities pulled down buildings and ran streets into and through it. Depositories of rubbish had been established there. Thirty years ago, this quarter was being gradually blotted out by the construction of new buildings. It is now entirely obliterated.

Le Petit-Picpus, of which no present plan retains a trace, is very clearly indicated in the plan of 1727, published at Paris by Denis Thierry, Rue Saint Jacques, opposite the Rue du Plâtre; and at Lyons by Jean Girin, Rue Mercière à la Prudence. Le Petit-Picpus had what we have just called a Y of streets formed by the Rue du Chemin Vert Saint Antoine dividing into two branches, the left-hand one taking the name of the Petite Rue Picpus,

and the right-hand that of Rue Polonceau. The two branches of the Y were joined at their summit by a sort of cross-bar called Rue Droit-mur. The Rue Polonceau ended there; the Petite Rue Picpus passed beyond, rising towards the Marché Lenoir. Any one who, coming from the Seine, reached the end of Rue Polonceau, had on his left Rue Droit-mur, turning sharply at a right angle, in front of him the wall of that street, and on his right a truncated prolongation of the Rue Droit-mur, a pocket, called the Cul-de-sac Genrot.

It was there that Jean Valjean was.

As we have said, on perceiving the black form, standing guard at the corner of the Rue Droit-mur and the Petite Rue Picpus, he started back. There was no room for doubt. This phantom was lying in wait for him.

What should he do?

There was now no time to turn back. What he had seen moving in the shadow a moment before in his rear was undoubtedly Javert and his squad. Javert was probably already at the beginning of the street, of which Jean Valjean was at the end. Javert, to all appearance, was acquainted with this little trap, and had taken his precautions by sending one of his men to guard the outlet. These conjectures, so closely resembling certainty, whirled suddenly in Jean Valjean's troubled brain, like a

handful of dust raised by a sudden blast. He examined the blind alley Genrot; that was barred. He examined the Rue Picpus; a sentry was there. He could see that dark form distinctly thrown on the white pavement bathed in moonlight. To advance, was to fall into the hands of this man. To go back, was to throw himself into Javert's arms. Jean Valjean felt as though caught in a net which was being slowly hauled in. He looked up to Heaven in despair.

IV.

GROPING FOR ESCAPE

In order to understand the following the reader must form an exact idea of the little Droit-mur lane, and particularly the corner to the left on turning out of the Rue Polonceau into this lane. The little Rue Droit-mur was almost entirely bordered on the right as far as the Petite Rue Picpus by poor-looking houses, on the left by a single building of severe outline, composed of several structures, which gradually rose from one floor to two as they approached the Petite Rue Picpus, so that the building, very high on the side of the Petite Rue Picpus, was quite low on the side of Rue Polonceau. There, at the corner of which we have spoken, it became so low as to be only a wall. This wall did not run parallel with the lane, but formed a very deep cant, concealed by its corners from any observers in either the Rue Polonceau or the Droit-mur lane.

From this cant the wall extended along Rue Polonceau as far as a house bearing the num-

ber forty-nine, and along the Droit-mur lane, where it was much shorter, to the sombre-looking building to which we have referred, whose gable it intersected, thus forming a new re-entering angle in the street. This gable had a gloomy appearance; only one window was visible, or, to speak more correctly, two shutters covered with sheet zinc and always closed.

The description of the locality which we are now giving is strictly correct, and will certainly awaken a very precise remembrance in the mind of the old inhabitants of the locality.

The cant in the wall was entirely occupied by a thing that resembled a colossal and wretched gateway. It was a vast collection of perpendicular planks, the top ones wider than those below, and fastened together by long transverse iron bands. Alongside was a porte cochère of ordinary dimensions, which had apparently been made in the wall within the last fifty years.

A linden tree displayed its branches above the cant, and the wall was covered with ivy on the side of the Rue Polonceau.

In Jean Valjean's desperate situation, this gloomy building had an uninhabited and a solitary look which attracted him. He hurriedly examined it. He said to himself, if he could only succeed in getting into it he might

perhaps be safe. Hope came to him with this idea.

Midway of the front of this building, on the Droit-mur lane, there were old leaden drain-pipes at all the windows of the different stories. The different branches of the tubing which led from a central pipe to each of these waste-pipes, formed a species of tree on the façade. These ramifications with their hundred elbows imitated those old vine branches which cling to the front of old farm-houses.

This grotesque espalier, with its lead and iron branches, was the first thing that struck Jean Valjean. He seated Cosette, with her back against a post, bidding her be silent, and hurried to the spot where the main pipe reached the ground. Perhaps there might be a way of scaling it and by that means entering the house. But the pipe was dilapidated and out of order and scarcely held to its cramping. Besides, all the windows of this silent house were protected by thick iron bars, even the garret-windows. And then the moon shone full upon this façade, and the man who was watching at the end of the street would see Jean Valjean climb up; and then what should he do with Cosette? how could he hoist her to the top of a three-story house?

He gave up all idea of climbing by the

conduit, and crept along the wall to re-enter Rue Polonceau.

When he reached the cant in the wall, where he had left Cosette, he noticed that no one could see him there. As we stated, he was there safe from all eyes, no matter on what side. Moreover, he was in the shadow. Then there were two doors. Perhaps they might be forced. The wall, above which he saw the linden tree and the ivy, evidently belonged to a garden where he could at least conceal himself, although there were as yet no leaves on the trees, and pass the rest of the night.

Time was slipping away; he must act quickly.

He tried the carriage door and found at once that it was fastened inside.

He went to the other large door with more hope. It was frightfully decrepit, its very size rendered it less solid, the planks were rotten, and the iron bands, there were only three, were rusty. It seemed possible to break through this worm-eaten barrier.

On examining it, he saw that this door was not a door. It had neither hinges, lock, braces nor crack in the middle. The iron bands crossed from one side to the other without a break. Through the crevices of the planks he caught a glimpse of rubble-work

and stones, which passers-by might have seen ten years back. He was forced to admit with consternation that this appearance of a door was simply an ornamentation in wood of a wall upon which it was placed. It was easy to pull down a plank, but he would then be face to face with a wall.

V.

WHICH WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE WITH THE STREETS LIGHTED WITH GAS

At this moment a muffled and regular sound began to make itself heard at some distance. Jean Valjean ventured to take a peep round the corner of the street. Seven or eight soldiers, formed in platoon, had just turned into the Rue Polonceau. He could see their bayonets gleaming. They were coming toward him.

These soldiers, at whose head he distinguished Javert's tall form, advanced slowly and cautiously. They frequently halted. It was plain that they were exploring all the recesses of the walls and all the entrances of doors and lanes.

It was—and here conjecture could not be in error—some patrol which Javert had met and which he had put in requisition. Javert's two assistants marched in their ranks. Judging from the pace at which they marched, and the halts they made, it would take them about a quarter of an hour to reach the spot

where Jean Valjean was. It was a frightful moment. A few minutes separated Jean Valjean from the awful precipice which yawned before him for the third time. And the galleys were now no longer simply the galleys. They were Cosette lost forever; that is to say, life in death.

There was no longer but one thing possible.

Jean Valjean had one peculiarity, he might be said to carry two wallets: in one he had the thoughts of a saint, in the other the formidable talents of a convict. He felt in one or the other as occasion required.

Among other resources, owing to his numerous escapes from the Toulon galleys, he had, it will be remembered, become master of that incredible art of raising himself without ladders, or cramping irons, and by mere muscular strength supporting himself by the back of his neck, by his shoulders, his hips, and his knees, scarcely making use of the few projections in the stonework, in the right angle of a wall, to the sixth floor if necessary; an art which rendered so terrible and so celebrated that corner of the yard in the Paris Conciergerie by which some twenty years ago the condemned Battemolle escaped.

Jean Valjean measured with his eye the height of the wall above which he saw the linden tree. It was about eighteen feet high.

The angle that it made with the gable end of the large building was filled up below with a triangular mass of masonry, probably intended to preserve this too convenient recess from a too public use. This preventive filling-up of the corners of a wall is very common in Paris.

This pile was about five feet high. The space to climb from its top to get upon the wall was not more than fourteen feet.

The wall was capped by a flat stone, without any projection.

The difficulty was Cosette. Cosette did not know how to scale a wall. Abandon her? Jean Valjean did not think of it. To carry her was impossible. A man requires his whole strength to carry out these strange ascents. The slightest burden would displace his centre of gravity and hurl him down.

He required a rope. Jean Valjean had none. Where was he to find a rope at midnight in the Rue Polonceau? Assuredly at this moment if Jean Valjean had possessed a kingdom he would have given it for a rope.

All extreme situations have their flashes, which sometimes blind and sometimes illuminate us.

Jean Valjean's despairing gaze fell on the lamp-post in the blind alley.

At this epoch there were no gas lights in the streets of Paris. At nightfall lamps were

lighted which were placed at intervals, and were pulled up and down by a rope that went across the street from end to end, running through the grooves of posts. The reel on which this rope was wound was enclosed below the lantern in a little iron box, of which the lamp-lighter had the key, and the rope itself was protected by a metal case.

Jean Valjean, with the energy of a final struggle, leaped across the street to the blind alley, burst the lock of the little box with the point of his knife, and an instant after was again by Cosette's side. He had a rope. These desperate inventors of expedients, when struggling with fatality, go to work rapidly.

We have explained that the street lamps had not been lighted that night. The lamp in the blind alley, therefore, was naturally extinguished, and any one might have passed close without noticing that it was no longer in its place.

Meanwhile, the hour, the place, the darkness, Jean Valjean's preoccupation, his singular actions, his going to and fro, all this began to alarm Cosette. Any other child would have begun crying loudly long before. She confined herself to pulling Jean Valjean by the skirt of his coat. The sound of the approaching patrol constantly became more and more distinct.

"Father," she whispered, "I am frightened; who is there coming?"

"Hush!" answered the unhappy man, "it is the Thénardiess."

Cosette started. He added,—

"Say nothing. Leave it to me. If thou dost cry out or sob, the Thénardiess will hear thee. She is coming to get thee back."

Then, without hurry, but without doing any thing twice over, with a firm and sharp precision, which was the more remarkable at such a moment, when the patrol and Javert might come upon him at any instant, he undid his cravat, passed it around Cosette's body under the arms, taking care that it should not hurt the child, fastened one end of the rope to the cravat by means of a knot which seamen call a swallow-knot, took the other end in his teeth, took off his shoes and stockings, and threw them over the wall, climbed upon the pile of masonry, and began raising himself in the angle of the wall and the gable with as much solidity and certainty as if he had the rounds of a ladder under his heels and elbows. Half a minute had not elapsed before he was on his knees on the wall.

Cosette watched him, stupefied, without saying a word. Jean Valjean's charge and the name of the Thénardiess had made her dumb.

All at once she heard Jean Valjean calling to her, in a very low voice,—

"Lean against the wall."

She obeyed.

"Don't speak, and don't be afraid," continued Jean Valjean.

And she felt herself lifted from the ground.

Before she had time to think where she was, she found herself on the top of the wall.

Jean Valjean grasped her, put her on his back, took her two little hands in his left hand, lay down flat and crawled along the wall till he reached the cut-off corner. As he had suspected, there was a building here, whose roof began at the top of the bastard gate and descended in a gentle slope nearly to the ground, grazing the linden tree.

This was a fortunate circumstance, for the wall was much higher on this side than on that of the street. Jean Valjean saw the ground, at a great depth, beneath him.

He had just reached the sloping roof, and had not yet loosed his hold of the coping, when a violent uproar announced the arrival of the patrol. The thundering voice of Javert could be heard:—

"Search the Cul-de-sac! The Droit-mur lane is guarded, the Petite Rue Picpus also. I will answer for it he is in the Cul-de-sac!"

The soldiers rushed into the Cul-de-sac Genrot.

Jean Valjean slipped down the roof, still supporting Cosette, reached the linden tree, and leaped on the ground. Whether from terror or courage Cosette had not uttered a sound. Her hands were a little scraped.

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VI.

THE BEGINNING OF AN ENIGMA

Jean Valjean found himself in a sort of garden, very large and of a singular appearance; one of those gloomy gardens that appear made to be seen in the winter, and at night. This garden was of an oblong shape, with a walk of tall poplars at the end, tall shrubs in the corners, and a clear space in the centre, where stood a very large, isolated tree, then a few fruit-trees, contorted and shaggy, like big bushes, some vegetable beds, a melon patch, whose glass frames glistened in the moonlight, and an old well. Here and there were stone benches that seemed black with moss. The walks were bordered with sorry-looking, upright shrubs. Grass covered half of them, and a green mould the other half.

Jean Valjean had on one side the building, the roof of which had assisted his descent, a pile of faggots, and behind the faggots, close to the wall, a stone statue, whose mutilated face was merely a shapeless mask, appearing indistinctly in the darkness.

The building was a species of ruin, apparently containing several dismantled rooms, of which one seemed to serve as a shed.

The large edifice of the Droit-mur lane, which ran back on the Petite Rue Picpus, had two façades at right angles looking into this garden. These inside façades were even more gloomy-looking than those outside. All the windows were grated. Not a single light could be seen. On the upper stories there were shutters as in prisons. One of these façades casts its shadow upon the other, and fell back on the garden like an immense black pall.

No other house was to be seen. The further end of the garden was lost in mist and darkness. Still, intersecting walls could be indistinctly made out, as if there were other gardens beyond, and also the low roofs in the Rue Polonceau.

Nothing more wild and more solitary than this garden could well be imagined; there was no one in it, as was natural at such an hour, but it did not seem as if the spot were made for anybody to walk in, even in broad daylight.

Jean Valjean's first care was to find his shoes and stockings and to put them on, then went into the shed with Cosette. A man who is escaping never thinks himself sufficiently concealed. The child, still thinking of the Thén-

ardiess, shared his instinct and cowered down as closely as she could.

Cosette trembled and clung to him. The tumultuous noise of the patrol could be heard searching the street and lane, the clatter of their musket-butts against the stones, the calls of Javert to the spies he had posted, and his imprecations, mingled with words which could not be distinguished.

At the end of a quarter of an hour it seemed as though this stormy grumbling began to recede. Jean Valjean did not breathe.

He had placed his hand gently upon Cosette's mouth.

Besides, the solitude about him was so strangely calm, that the frightful uproar so close at hand did not even cast a shadow of disturbance over it. It seemed as if these walls had been built with those deaf stones spoken of in the Bible.

All at once, in the midst of this profound calm, a new sound burst forth; a heavenly, divine, ineffable sound, as ravishing as the other had been horrible. It was a hymn that issued from the darkness, a dazzling blending of prayer and harmony in the dark and fearful silence of the night: voices of women, but voices with the pure accent of virgins and the artless accents of children, such voices as do not belong to earth, and resemble those that

the new-born still hear, and the dying begin to hear. This chant came from the gloomy building overlooking the garden. At the moment when the noise of the demons was receding it seemed like a choir of angels approaching in the dark.

Cosette and Jean Valjean fell on their knees.

They knew not what it was, they knew not where they were, but both man and child, the penitent and the innocent, felt that they must fall on their knees.

These voices had this strange effect: they did not prevent the building from appearing deserted. It was like a supernatural chant in an uninhabited house.

While the voices sang, Jean Valjean thought of nothing else. He no longer saw the night, he saw a blue sky. He seemed to feel the spreading of those wings which we all have within us.

The chant ceased. It had probably lasted some time. Jean Valjean could not have said how long. Hours of ecstasy are never more than a moment.

All was silent once more. There was no sound in the garden, no sound in the street. That which threatened, that which reassured, all had faded away. The wind shook on the coping of the wall some dry grass, which produced a soft and melancholy sound.

VII.

THE ENIGMA CONTINUED

The night breeze had risen, which indicated that it must be between one and two in the morning. Poor Cosette did not speak. As she had sat herself down beside him and leaned her head against him, Jean Valjean thought that she was asleep. He bent down and looked at her. Cosette's eyes were wide open, and she had a look that gave Jean Valjean pain.

She was still trembling.

"Art thou sleepy?" said Jean Valjean.

"I am very cold," she answered.

A moment after she added:

"Is she there yet?"

"Who?" said Jean Valjean.

"Madame Thénardier."

Jean had already forgotten the means he had employed to keep Cosette silent.

"Oh," said he, "she has gone. Fear nothing more."

The child sighed, as if a weight were lifted from her breast.

The ground was damp, the shed open on all sides, and the wind grew more cutting every moment. The man took off his coat and wrapped Cosette up in it.

"Art thou less cold so?" he said.

"Oh! yes, father."

"Well, wait here a moment for me. I will come back soon."

He left the ruin, and went along by the large building, in search of some better shelter. He came to doors, but they were closed. There were bars on all the windows of the ground-floor.

After passing the interior angle of the building he noticed that he had come to some arched windows, and perceived a faint light. He raised himself on tip-toe and looked through one of these windows. They all belonged to a large hall paved with broad slabs, and intersected by arches and pillars, in which nothing could be distinguished but a faint light and deep shadows. The light came from a night-lamp burning in the corner. This hall was empty and nothing was stirring in it. Yet, after a long look, he fancied that he could see on the ground something stretched on the pavement that seemed to be covered with a pall and which resembled a human form. It was stretched out flat, face downwards, the arms crossed, motionless as

death. From a thing that looked like a serpent which trailed along the pavement, it looked as if this sinister form had a rope about its neck.

The whole hall was enveloped in that mist peculiar to dimly-lighted places, which intensifies the horror.

Jean Valjean has often said since that, although he had witnessed many funereal sights in his life, he had never seen anything more freezing or more terrible than this enigmatical figure fulfilling some strange mystery, he knew not what, in that gloomy place, and thus dimly seen in the night. It was frightful to suppose that it might be dead, and more frightful still to think that it might possibly be alive.

He had the courage to press his face to the window pane, and watch to see if the thing would stir. He remained what seemed to him a long time, the outstretched form made no movement. Suddenly, he was seized with indescribable horror, and he fled. He ran towards the shed without daring to look back. It seemed to him that if he turned his head he would see the figure walking behind him with rapid strides and waving its arms.

He reached the ruin panting. His knees gave way; a cold sweat was running down his back.

Where was he? who could have imagined

anything like this species of sepulchre in the heart of Paris? What was this strange house? A building full of nocturnal mystery, calling souls in the darkness with the voice of angels, and, when they arrive, suddenly offering them this frightful vision; promising to open the bright gate of heaven, and, instead, opening the horrible portal of the tomb! and it was really a mansion, a house which had its number in a street! It was not a dream! He had to touch the walls to believe it.

Cold, anxiety, apprehension, and the agitation of the night, gave him a real fever, and all his ideas were confused in his brain.

He went to Cosette. She was asleep.

VIII.

THE ENIGMA REDOUBLES

The child had laid her head upon a stone and gone to sleep.

He sat down beside her, and looked at her. By degrees, as he looked, he grew calm and regained possession of his freedom of mind.

He clearly perceived this truth, the basis of his life henceforth, that, so long as she should be alive, so long as he should have her with him, he should need nothing except for her, and fear nothing save on her account. He did not even realize that he was very cold, having taken off his coat to cover her.

Still, through the reverie into which he had fallen, he had heard for some time past a singular noise. It was like a little bell that some one was shaking. This noise was in the garden. It could be heard distinctly, though faintly. It resembled the gentle tinkling of cow-bells in the pastures at night.

This noise made Jean Valjean turn.

He looked, and saw that there was some one in the garden.

Something that resembled a man was walking among the melon frames, rising up, stooping down, stopping with a regular motion, as if he were drawing or stretching something upon the ground. This creature was apparently lame.

Jean Valjean started with the continuous trembling of the outcast; everything is hostile and suspicious to them. They distrust the day because it allows them to be seen, and night because it helps in surprising them. Just now he shuddered because the garden was deserted, and now he shuddered because there was some one in it.

He fell from imaginary into real terror. He said to himself that Javert and the police had probably not gone away, that they had, doubtless, left watchmen in the street; and that if this man discovered him in this garden he would cry thief and hand him over. He gently took the still sleeping Cosette in his arms, and carried her behind a heap of old furniture in the furthermost corner of the shed. Cosette did not stir.

From there he watched the movements of the being in the melon patch. What was strange was, that the tinkle of the little bell seemed to follow this man's every movement.

When he approached, the sound approached; when he moved away, the sound moved away. If he made a sudden movement a tinkling accompanied the movement; when he stopped, the noise ceased. It seemed evident that the bell was fastened to this man; but in that case, what could be the meaning of it? What was this man to whom a bell was fastened, as if he were a ram or an ox?

While asking himself these questions, he touched Cosette's hands. They were icy.

"Oh, God!" said he.

He called to her in a low tone:

"Cosette!"

She did not open her eyes.

He shook her briskly.

She did not awake.

"Can she be dead?" said he, and he sprang up, shivering from head to foot.

The most frightful thoughts rushed through his mind in confusion. There are moments when hideous suppositions assail us like a band of furies, and violently force the bolts of our brain. When those whom we love are in danger, prudence is scattered to the winds. He remembered that sleep may be fatal in the open air on a cold night.

Cosette, pallid, was lying stretched out motionless at his feet.

He listened for her breathing; she breathed,

but so faintly that it seemed as if her respiration might cease at any moment.

How was he to warm her? how rouse her? All else faded from his mind. He rushed wildly out of the shed.

It was absolutely necessary that in less than a quarter of an hour Cosette should be in bed and before a fire.

IX.

THE MAN WITH THE BELL

He walked straight up to the man whom he saw in the garden. He had taken in his hand the roll of money which was in his vest-pocket.

This man was looking down, and did not see him coming. In a few strides, Jean Valjean was by his side.

Jean Valjean addressed him by crying,

"A hundred francs!"

The man started and raised his eyes.

"A hundred francs for you," Jean Valjean continued, "if you will give me a shelter for this night."

The moon shone full in Jean Valjean's frightened countenance.

"What, it is you, Father Madeleine!" said the man.

This name, uttered thus in the darkness, in this unknown place, by this unknown man, made Jean Valjean recoil.

He was prepared for everything save that.

He who spoke was an old man, bent and lame, dressed much like a peasant, wearing on his left leg a leathern knee-cap, from which hung a rather large bell. His face was in the shadow and could not be distinguished.

Meanwhile, the man had doffed his bonnet and said, all in a tremor,—

"Oh, my God, how did you come here, Father Madeleine? how did you get in? Oh, Lord, did you fall from heaven? There is no doubt that if ever you do fall, it will be from there. And, what a state you are in! you have no cravat, you have no hat, you have no coat! do you know that you would have frightened anybody who did not know you? No coat! oh, my goodness, are the saints all crazy now? But how, then, did you get in?"

One word did not wait for the next. The old man spoke with a rustic volubility in which there was nothing alarming. It was all said with a mixture of stupefaction and simple kindness.

"Who are you? and what is this house?" Jean Valjean asked.

"Oh, indeed, that is good, now," exclaimed the old man. "I am the one you got the place for here, and this house is the one you got me the place in. What, you do not recognize me?"

"No," said Jean Valjean; "and how is it that you know me?"

"You saved my life," said the man.

He turned, a moonbeam lighted up his face, and Jean Valjean recognized old Fauchelevent.

"Ah!" said Jean Valjean, "it is you? Yes, I recognize you."

"That is lucky," said the old man, reproachfully.

"And what are you doing here?" Jean Valjean added.

"Why! I am covering my melons that are here."

In point of fact, old Fauchelevent held in his hand at the moment when Jean Valjean accosted him a piece of matting, which he was spreading out over the melon patch. He had spread out a good many pieces during the hour he had been in the garden. It was this work that produced the peculiar movements watched by Jean Valjean from the shed.

He continued,—

"I said to myself: the moon is bright, there will be frost. Suppose I put these great coats on my melons. And," he added, looking at Jean Valjean, with a hearty laugh, "you should have done the same! But how did you come here?"

Jean Valjean, feeling himself known by this man, at least, under the name of Madeleine,

proceeded now with greater caution. He multiplied questions. Curiously enough, they seemed to have changed parts,—he, the intruder, became the questioner.

"And what is that bell you have on your knee?"

"That?" answered Fauchelevent; "it is, that they may avoid me."

"What do you mean,—that they may avoid you?"

Old Fauchelevent winked in an indescribable manner.

"Oh, bless me! they are nothing but women in this house; many young girls. It seems that I am dangerous to meet. The little bell warns them; when I come they go."

"What is this house?"

"Why, you know very well."

"But I do not."

"Why, you got me this place here as gardener."

"Answer me as if I knew nothing."

"Well, it is the convent of the little Picpus, then."

Jean Valjean's recollections returned to him. Chance, that is to say, Providence, had brought him to the very convent in the Quartier Saint Antoine, where old Fauchelevent, crippled by his fall from his cart, had been engaged on his recommendation two years before.

He repeated, as if speaking to himself,—

"The convent of the Petit-Picpus!"

"But come now, tell me," Fauchelevent continued, "how the deuce did you get in here, you, Father Madeleine? for though you are a saint, you are a man, and no men are admitted here."

"But you are."

"I am the only one."

"And yet," Jean Valjean continued, "I must remain."

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Fauchelevent.

Jean Valjean approached the old man and said to him in a grave voice,—

"Father Fauchelevent, I saved your life."

"I was the first to remember it," answered Fauchelevent.

"Well, you can do for me to-day what I once did for you."

Fauchelevent grasped in his old wrinkled and trembling hands the two robust hands of Jean Valjean, and for some seconds seemed as if unable to speak. At length he cried:—

"Oh! it would be a blessing from Heaven if I could repay you just a little for that! I! Save your life! Monsieur the Mayor, the old man is at your disposal."

A wonderful joy seemed to transfigure the aged gardener. His face was radiant.

"What do you wish me to do?" continued he.

"I will explain. You have a room?"

"I have an isolated shanty, behind the ruins of the old convent, in a corner which no one can see. There are three rooms."

The shanty was in truth so well concealed behind the ruins, and so placed that no one could see it, that Jean Valjean had not seen it.

"Good," said Jean Valjean; "now I will ask two things of you."

"What are they, Monsieur the Mayor?"

"First, that you will tell to no one what you know about me. Secondly, that you will not try to learn anything further."

"As you please. I know that you can do nothing but what is honest, and that you have always been a man of God. And then, besides, it was you who put me here. It is your place. I am at your service."

"Enough. Now, come with me. We will fetch the child."

"Ah!" said Fauchelevent, "there is a child?"

He did not add a word, but followed Jean Valjean as a dog follows its master.

In less than half an hour, Cosette, who had become rosy again by the heat of a good fire, was asleep in the old gardener's bed. Jean Valjean had put on his cravat and coat again; the hat thrown over the wall had been found

and picked up; while Jean Valjean was putting on his coat, Fauchelevent took off his knee-cap with the bell, and hung them on a nail on the wall, near one of the shutters. The two men were warming themselves with their elbows on a table on which Fauchelevent had set a piece of cheese, some brown bread, a bottle of wine, and two glasses, and the old man said to Jean Valjean, as he laid his hand on his knee,—

"Ah! Father Madeleine! you did not know me at first! You save people's lives and forget them afterwards! Oh, that's bad! they remember you; you are ungrateful."

X.

HOW JAVERT FOUND ONLY AN EMPTY NEST

The events, the reverse of which, so to speak, we have just seen, had occurred under the simplest conditions.

When Jean Valjean, on the night of the very day that Javert arrested him at the death-bed of Fantine, escaped from the municipal jail of M—— sur M——, the police supposed that the escaped convict had taken his way towards Paris. Paris is a maelstrom in which everything is lost; and everything disappears in this whirlpool of the world as in the whirlpool of the sea. No forest conceals a man so well as this multitude. Fugitives of every description are aware of the fact. They go to Paris to be engulfed; there are gulfs that are means of safety. The police are aware of this too, and it is in Paris that they search for what they have lost elsewhere. They sought there the ex-mayor of M—— sur M——. Javert was summoned to Paris to help in the investigation. Javert, in fact, was of great

assistance in recapturing Jean Valjean. The zeal and intelligence of Javert on this occasion were noticed by M. Chabouillet, Secretary of the Prefecture under Count Anglès. Monsieur Chabouillet, who had before been a friend to Javert, had the police-inspector of M—— sur M—— appointed to the Police of Paris. There Javert proved himself variously, and —let us say it, though the word seems unusual when applied to such services—honorably useful.

He thought no more of Jean Valjean—with these hounds ever on the hunt, the wolf of to-day causes the wolf of yesterday to be forgotten—until in December, 1823, he, who never read newspapers, read one. But Javert, as a monarchist, wished to know the details of the triumphal entry of the "Prince Generalissimo" into Bayonne. As he was finishing the article which interested him, a name, the name of Jean Valjean, at the foot of a column, attracted his attention. The newspaper announced that the convict Jean Valjean was dead, and published the fact in such explicit terms that Javert did not doubt it. He merely said, "There's a bad job ended." Then he threw away the paper, and thought no more of it.

Some time after, it happened that a police report was sent by the Prefecture of the Seine

et Oise to the Prefecture of the Police of Paris in relation to the abduction of a child, which took place, it was said, under peculiar circumstances, in the parish of Montfermeil. A little girl of seven or eight years of age, the report said, who had been confided by her mother to an inn-keeper of the town, had been stolen by a stranger; this little girl answered to the name of Cosette, and was the child of a woman of the town named Fantine, who had died in an hospital, it was not known when or where. This report passed under Javert's eyes, and set him to thinking.

The name of Fantine was familiar to him; he remembered that Jean Valjean had actually made him—Javert—laugh aloud by asking him for a respite of three days to go and fetch this creature's child. He remembered that Jean Valjean was arrested at Paris at the very moment when he was getting into the Montfermeil diligence. Some indications had led to the supposition at the time that it was for the second time that he was getting into this coach, and that he had already on the previous night taken a trip to the vicinity of this village, for he had not been seen in the village itself. What was he doing in the region of Montfermeil? no one was able to guess. Javert understood it now. Fantine's daughter was there. Jean Valjean was going to get her.

Now, this child had just been stolen by an unknown man! Who could this man be? could it be Jean Valjean? But Jean Valjean was dead.—Javert, without saying a word to any one, took the coach at the "Pewter Platter," in the Cul-de-Sac Planchette, and went off to Montfermeil.

He expected to find there considerable light on the matter; instead, he only found greater obscurity.

In the beginning, the Thénardiers, in their spite, had blabbed a good deal. The disappearance of the Lark had made some noise in the village. There were soon several versions of the story, which finally settled down into an abduction. Hence the police report. Still, after his first outburst of temper, Thénardier, with his admirable instinct, very speedily comprehended that it is never useful to set the authorities at work, and that his complaint about the *abduction* of Cosette would have as primary result the fixing upon himself, and upon many dark matters he was mixed up in, the keen eye of justice. The last thing that owls want is a candle. And then, again, how should he explain the fifteen hundred francs which he had received? He stopped short, stopped his wife's mouth, and affected amazement when people spoke about "the stolen child." He did not at all understand; he

had certainly complained at the first moment about his little darling being "taken from him" so suddenly; he would have liked, for affection's sake, to keep her for two or three days longer; but it was her "grandfather" who had come to fetch her; the most natural thing in the world. He had added the "grandfather," which sounded well. It was upon this story that Javert fell on reaching Montfermeil: the grandfather put Jean Valjean out of the question.

Javert, however, probed with a few questions Thénardier's story: "Who was this grandfather, and what was his name?" Thénardier answered with simplicity, "He is a rich farmer. I saw his passport. I think his name was M. Guillaume Lambert."

Lambert is a respectable and most reassuring name. Javert returned to Paris.

"Jean Valjean is really dead," he said to himself, "and I am an ass."

He had begun to forget all this story, when, in the month of March, 1824, he heard some talk of a peculiar character who lived in the parish of Saint Médard, and who was called the "beggar who gives alms." This individual was said to be a man with an income, whose name no one exactly knew, and who lived alone with a little girl of eight years of age, who knew nothing about herself, except

that she came from Montfermeil. Montfermeil! that name recurring again, made Javert prick up his ears. An old begging spy, an ex-beadle, to whom this person had extended his charity, added a few more details. This individual was a very unsociable person; never going out until nightfall; speaking to nobody, except to the poor now and then, and letting no one make his acquaintance. He wore a wretched old yellow coat, which was worth several millions, being lined throughout with bank notes. This decidedly piqued Javert's curiosity. In order to see this fantastic rich man nearer without startling him, he one day borrowed the beadle's rags and the place where the old spy crouched every evening, whining out his prayers, and playing the spy as he prayed.

"The suspicious individual," in point of fact, came up to Javert, thus disguised, and gave him alms. At this moment Javert raised his head, and the shock which Jean Valjean received thinking that he recognized Javert, Javert received thinking that he recognized Jean Valjean.

Still, the darkness might have deceived him; the death of Jean Valjean was officially certified; and Javert felt serious doubts; when in doubt, Javert, a scrupulous man, never collared anybody.

He followed his man to the old Gorbeau house, and set the old woman talking, which was no difficult task. She confirmed the statement of the coat lined with millions, and related to him the episode of the thousand-franc note. She had seen it! she had touched it! Javert hired a room. That very night he took possession of it. He listened at the door of the mysterious lodger, in the hope of hearing his voice, but Jean Valjean caught sight of his candle through the key-hole, and foiled the spy by keeping silence.

The following day, Jean Valjean decamped. But the noise of the five-franc piece which he dropped was noticed by the old woman, who, hearing money jingling, thought that he might be going to move, and hastened to warn Javert. At night, when Jean Valjean went out, Javert was waiting for him behind the trees of the boulevard with two men.

Javert had called for assistance from the Prefecture, but did not mention the name of the individual whom he hoped to seize. That was his secret; he kept it for three reasons: first, because the slightest indiscretion might give the alarm to Jean Valjean; secondly, because to clap his hand on an old escaped convict, supposed to be dead, a criminal whom the records of justice had already classified forever among "malefactors of the

most dangerous kind," would be a magnificent success, which the older members of the Parisian police would certainly never leave to a new-comer, like Javert,—and he was afraid that he might be robbed of his galley-slave; lastly, because Javert, being an artist in his line, had a liking for the unexpected. He hated those successes that have the bloom taken off them by being talked of a long time beforehand. He liked to elaborate his masterpieces in the darkness and then unveil them suddenly.

Javert had followed Jean Valjean from tree to tree, and then from street corner to street corner, and had not lost sight of him for an instant; even at the moment when Jean Valjean fancied himself the safest, Javert's eye was upon him.

Why did Javert not arrest Jean Valjean? Because he was still in doubt.

It must be borne in mind that, at this period, the police were not exactly at their ease; the free press annoyed them. A few arbitrary arrests, denounced by the newspapers, had re-echoed even in the Chambers, and made the Prefecture timid. Attacking individual liberty was a serious matter. The agents were afraid of making mistakes; the Prefect held them responsible, and a mistake meant dismissal. Imagine the effect

which this brief paragraph, repeated in twenty papers, would have produced in Paris,—"Yesterday, an old, white-haired grandfather, a respectable person living on his income, who was taking a walk with his granddaughter, eight years of age, was arrested and taken to the house of detention, as an escaped convict."

Let us also mention that Javert had scruples of his own; the warnings of his conscience were added to the injunctions of the Prefect. He was really in doubt.

Jean Valjean turned his back, and was walking in the darkness.

Sorrow, trouble, anxiety, despondency, this fresh misfortune of being compelled to fly by night and seek a chance asylum in Paris for Cosette and himself, the necessity of adapting his pace to the pace of a child—all this had unconsciously changed Jean Valjean's gait, and imparted to his whole carriage such an appearance of old age that the police itself, incarnated in Javert, might be deceived, and were deceived. The impossibility of approaching close to him, his dress of an old emigré tutor, Thénardier's statement which made him out a grandfather; finally, the belief in his death at the galleys, added yet more to the uncertainty which was increasing in Javert's mind.

For a moment he had an idea of suddenly asking for his papers. But, if the man were

not Jean Valjean, and if he were not a good old honest man of means, he was, in all probability, some fellow profoundly and skilfully adept in the obscure meshes of Parisian crime; some leader of a dangerous band who gave alms to hide his other talents, an old trick. He had comrades, accomplices, and lurking-places, in which he would doubtless take refuge. All the turnings he made in the streets seemed to indicate that he was not merely a simple, honest man. To arrest him too quickly would be "to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs." Where was the harm of waiting? Javert felt quite certain that he could not escape.

He walked along, therefore, in considerable perplexity, asking himself a hundred questions in regard to this enigmatical personage.

It was not until quite late, in the Rue Pontoise, that, thanks to a bright light that shone from a wine-shop, he decidedly recognized Jean Valjean.

There are two creatures who can be deeply thrilled: the mother, who finds her child, and the tiger, who finds his prey. Javert felt this profound thrill.

As soon as he had positively recognized Jean Valjean, the formidable convict, he noticed that he had but two companions, and asked for support at the police office in the

Rue Pontoise. Before grasping a thorny stick, men put on gloves.

This delay, and the halt at the Rollin square to arrange his plan of action with his men, nearly made him lose the trail; but he quickly guessed that Jean Valjean wished to place the river between his pursuers and himself. He hung his head and reflected, like a hound putting its nose to the ground to make sure of the way. Javert, with the powerful correctness of his instinct, went straight to the Austerlitz bridge. One word to the toll-keeper put him on the right track.—"Have you seen a man with a little girl?"—"I made him pay two sous," the toll-keeper answered. — Javert reached the bridge just in time to see Jean Valjean on the other side of the water, leading Cosette across the moonlit square. He saw him enter the Rue du Chemin Vert Saint Antoine; he thought of the Cul-de-sac Genrot, placed there like a trap, and the only outlet from the Rue Droit-mur by the little Rue Picpus. In order to *stop the earth*, as sportsmen say, he sent one of his men hastily by a detour to guard that outlet. A patrol passing, on its return to the station at the Arsenal, he put it in requisition and took it along with him. In such games as this soldiers are trumps. Moreover, it is a principle that, to get the better of a wild boar, takes the science of the hunter

and the strength of the dogs. These arrangements made, Javert, feeling that Jean Valjean was caught between the blind alley on the right, his own agent on the left, and himself behind, took a pinch of snuff.

Then he began to play. He enjoyed a delicious and infernal moment; he let his man go before him, knowing that he held him, but desiring to defer as long as possible the moment of arresting him; delighting to feel that he was caught, and to set him free; watching him with the pleasure of the spider which lets the fly flutter for a while, or the cat that lets the mouse run. The claw and the talon find a monstrous pleasure in the quivering of the animal imprisoned in their grasp. What delight there is in thus strangling!

Javert was rejoicing. The meshes of his net were solidly made. He was certain of success; he had now only to close his hand.

Accompanied as he was, the idea of resistance was impossible, however energetic, vigorous, and desperate Jean Valjean might be.

Javert advanced slowly, examining and searching as he passed all the recesses of the street, like the pockets of a thief.

When he reached the centre of the web the fly was no longer there.

Imagine his exasperation.

He questioned his sentinel of the Rue

Droit-mur and Rue Picpus; this officer, who had remained motionless at his post had not seen the man pass.

It happens at times that a stag breaks with the head covered, that is to say, escapes, although the hound is upon him; then the oldest huntsmen know not what to say. Duvivier, Liguiville and Desprez know not what to say. In a disappointment of this nature, Artonge exclaimed,—"It is not a stag, it is a sorcerer."

Javert would fain have uttered the same cry.

His disappointment was midway between despair and fury.

It is certain that Napoleon blundered in the campaign in Russia, that Alexander blundered in the Indian war, that Cæsar blundered in the African war, that Cyrus blundered in the Scythian war,—and that Javert blundered in his campaign against Jean Valjean. He was probably wrong in hesitating to recognize the ex-galley slave. The first glance should have sufficed for him. He did wrong in not apprehending him purely and simply in the old house. He did wrong in not arresting him, upon recognition, in the Rue Pontoise. He did wrong to hold council with his colleagues in the bright moonlight of the Rollin square. Certainly advice is useful, and it is well to know and to interrogate those of the dogs which deserve credence. But the hunter

cannot take too many precautions when he is chasing cunning animals, like the wolf and the convict. Javert, by too much anxiety to set his blood-hounds on the track, alarmed his game by giving him wind of the pursuit, and started it off. Above all, he was wrong, when he had regained the scent at the Austerlitz bridge, to play the dangerous and foolish trick of holding such a man at the end of a thread. He fancied himself stronger than he was, and thought he could play with the lion as if it were a mouse. At the same time he esteemed himself too weak when he thought it necessary to procure help. Fatal precaution, loss of precious time. Javert committed all these blunders, but was, none the less, one of the cleverest and most correct detectives that ever existed. He was, in the full acceptation of the term, what, in venery, is called, *a cunning dog*. But who is perfect?

Great strategicians have their eclipses.

Great blunders are often made, like stout ropes, of a multitude of fibres. Take the cable thread by thread, hold all the small determining motives separately, you break them one after the other, and you say, "That is all!" Wind them and twist them together, you have something tremendous. It is Attila hesitating between Marcianus in the East and Valentinianus in the West; it is Hannibal delaying at

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Capua; it is Danton falling asleep at Arcis-sur-Aube.

However this may be, even at the moment when he perceived that Jean Valjean had escaped him, Javert did not lose his head. Sure that the convict who had broken his ban could not be very far off, he set watches, organized traps and ambuscades, and beat the quarter the whole night through. The first thing he saw was the disorder of the box under the street lamp and the cut cord. This was valuable evidence, which, however, led him astray, in so much as it made him direct all his researches towards the Cul-de-sac Genrot. There are in this alley some rather low walls, surrounding gardens which extend to some very large uncultivated grounds. Jean Valjean had evidently fled in that direction. The fact is, that if he had gone a little farther down the Cul-de-sac Genrot, he would, in all probability, have done so, and been a lost man. Javert explored these gardens and these grounds as if he were searching for a needle.

At daybreak he left two intelligent men on the watch, and returned to the prefecture of police, crestfallen as a spy captured by a robber.

BOOK SIX

PETIT PICPUS

I.

PETITE RUE PICPUS, NUMBER SIXTY-TWO

Half a century ago nothing resembled more closely the most ordinary *porte cochère* than the *porte cochère* of number sixty-two, Petite Rue Picpus. This door, generally half-open in the most inviting manner, disclosed two things which are not of a very mournful nature—a court-yard with walls covered with vines, and the face of a lounging porter. Above the rear wall, tall trees could be seen. When a sunbeam enlivened the court, when a glass of wine enlivened the porter, it was difficult to pass before number sixty-two, Petite Rue Picpus, and not carry away a pleasant thought. But, nevertheless, you had had a glimpse of a very gloomy place.

The threshold smiled, but the house prayed and wept.

If you succeeded, which was not easy, in passing the porter—as was, indeed, impossible for nearly all, for there was an "Open, Sesame," which it was necessary to know—

if, having passed the porter, you entered on the right a small hall from which ran a staircase enclosed between two walls, and so narrow that only one person could go up at a time: if you were not frightened at the canary-colored plaster and chocolate wainscot of this staircase, and still boldly ascended, you passed first one landing, then another and found yourself in a passage on the first-floor, where the yellow mixture and the chocolate skirting followed you with a quiet pertinacity. The staircase and passage were lighted by two fine windows. The passage-way made a sudden turn and became dark. If you doubled this cape, you came, in a few steps, to a door, which was the more mysterious that it was not closed. Pushing it open, you found yourself in a small room about six feet square, with tiled floor, well scrubbed, neat and cold, and hung with a yellow-green sprigged paper, at fifteen sous the roll. A pale white light came through a large window with small panes, on the left, and occupied the whole width of the room. You looked, but saw no one; you listened, but heard neither a footstep nor a human sound. The walls were bare; the room unfurnished—there was not even a chair.

You looked again, and saw in the wall facing the door, a hole, about a foot square,

covered with a black, knotty, substantial, cross-barred grating, which formed squares—I had almost said meshes—less than an inch and a half across. The little green sprigs on the nankeen paper came right up to these bars, calmly and orderly, without being startled or withered by the funereal contact. Even supposing that any human being had been so wondrously thin as to attempt to go in or out by the square hole, this grating would have prevented it. It did not let the body pass, but it let the eyes pass, that is to say, the mind could. This seemed to have been thought of, for it had been lined by a sheet of tin inserted in the wall a little behind it, in which were bored thousands of holes more microscopic than those of a strainer. Beneath this plate was an opening exactly like the mouth of a letter-box. A bell-wire attached to a bell hung at the right of this grated opening.

If you pulled this wire, a bell tinkled, and you heard a voice, close to you, which made you start.

"Who is there?" the voice asked.

It was a woman's voice, a gentle voice, so gentle that it was mournful.

Here, again, there was a magic word which it was necessary to know.

If you did not know it, the voice ceased, and the wall became silent again, as if the

terrifying darkness of the tomb were on the other side.

If you knew the word, the voice continued, —"Enter at the right."

You then noticed at your right, facing the window, a glazed door, surmounted by a glazed sash and painted gray. You raised the latch, passed through the door, and experienced precisely the same feeling as when entering a grated box at the theatre, before the gilt grating has been lowered and the chandelier lighted. You were in fact in a species of theatre-box, scarce lighted by the faint light that came through the glass door, narrow, furnished with two old chairs and a piece of ragged straw matting—a genuine box with its front to lean upon, on which was a tablet of black wood. This box had a grating, but it was not made of gilt wood as at the opera, but was a monstrous trellis-work of frightfully interlaced iron bars, fastened to the wall by enormous clamps that resembled clenched fists.

After a few moments, and your eye began to grow accustomed to this cellar-like gloom, you tried to look through the grating, but could not see more than six inches beyond it. There, it met a barrier of black shutters, secured and strengthened by wooden cross-bars, and painted gingerbread yellow. These shutters were jointed, divided into long thin

planks, and covered the whole width of the grating. They were always closed.

In a few minutes, you heard a voice calling to you from behind the shutters, and saying to you,

"I am here, what do you want of me?"

It was a loved voice, sometimes an adored voice. No one was to be seen. Scarcely could the sound of breathing be heard. It seemed as if it were a ghostly voice addressing you through the wall of a tomb.

If you came under certain required and very rare conditions, the narrow strip of one of the shutters opened opposite to you, and the ghostly voice became an apparition. Behind the grating, behind the shutter, you perceived, as far as the grating would allow, a head, of which you only saw the mouth and chin; the rest was covered by a black veil. You caught a glimpse of a black wimple and of an indistinct form, covered by a black pall. This head spoke to you, but did not look at you, and never smiled.

The light that came from behind you was so arranged that you saw her in the light, and she saw you in shadow. This light was a symbol.

Meantime, your eyes gazed eagerly through the opening into this place, secure from all observation,—a deep obscurity surrounded

this form clothed in mourning. Your eyes investigated this obscurity and tried to distinguish what there was around the apparition. In a very little time you perceived that you could see nothing. What you saw was night, emptiness, gloom, a winter fog mingled with the vapor from a tomb; a sort of terrifying peace; a silence in which nothing could be heard, not even sighs; a shade in which nothing could be discerned, not even phantoms.

What you saw was the interior of a cloister.

It was the interior of that severe and gloomy house, that was called the convent of the Bernardines of the Perpetual Adoration. This box in which you found yourself was the parlor. This voice, the first that addressed you, was the voice of the portress, who was always seated, silent and motionless, on the other side of the wall, near the square opening, defended by the iron grating and tin plate with the thousand holes, like a double visor.

The obscurity in which the grated box was plunged, resulted from the fact that the parlor, which had a window on the side towards the outside world, had none on the side of the convent. Profane eyes must see nothing of this sacred spot.

Still there was something beyond this

shadow, there was a light; there was life amid this death. Although this convent was the most strictly immured of all, we will endeavor to enter it and to take the reader in with us, and describe, as fully as we may, things which story-tellers have never seen, and consequently never recorded.

II.

THE OBEDIENCE OF MARTIN VERGA

This convent, which had already existed for many years prior to 1824, in the Petite Rue Picpus, was a community of Bernardines of the Obedience of Martin Verga.

These Bernardines, consequently, were not attached to Clairvaux, like the Bernardine brothers, but to Citeaux, like the Benedictines. In other words, they were subjects, not of Saint Bernard, but of Saint Benedict.

Any one who has at all turned over folios knows that Martin Verga founded, in 1425, a congregation of Bernardo-Benedictines, whose head-quarters were Salamanca, and which had Alcala as an off-shoot.

This congregation had put out branches in all the Catholic countries of Europe.

This grafting of one order upon another is not unusual in the Latin Church. If we confine our attention merely to the aforesaid Order of Saint Benedict we find four con-

gregations attached to it, beside the obedience of Martin Verga; in Italy two, Monte Cassino and Saint Justina of Padua; two in France, Cluny, and Saint-Maur, and nine orders,—Valombrosa, Grammont, the Celestins, the Calmalduli, the Chartreux, the Humiliati, the Olivataus, and the Silvestrines, and, lastly, Citeaux; for Citeaux itself, while the trunk of other orders, is only a branch from Saint Benedict. Citeaux dates from Saint Robert, abbot of Molesme, in the diocese of Langres, in 1098. Now it was in 529 that the devil, who had retired to the desert of Subiaco (he was old, did he turn hermit?), was expelled from the ancient temple of Apollo, where he lived, by Saint Benedict, who was seventeen years of age.

Next to the rules of the Carmelites, who walk barefoot, wear a withe around their throats and never sit down, the most severe rules are those of the Bernardo-Benedictines of Martin Verga. They are dressed in black with a wimple, which, by the express order of Saint Benedict, comes up to the chin. A serge gown with wide sleeves, a large woollen veil, the wimple which comes up to the chin, cut square across the breast, and the coif, which comes down to their eyes,—such is their dress. All is black, excepting the coif, which is white. Novices wear the same garb,

but all white, while the professed nuns wear in addition a rosary by their side.

The Bernardo-Benedictines of Martin Verga practise the Perpetual Adoration, in the same way as those Benedictines called the ladies of the Holy Sacrament, who, at the beginning of this century, had two houses in Paris, one in the Temple, the other in the Rue Neuve Sainte Geneviève. In other respects, the nuns of the Petit-Picpus of whom we are speaking were an entirely separate order from the Ladies of the Holy Sacrament. There were many differences in their rules, there were some in their costume. The Bernardo-Benedictines of Petit-Picpus wore a black wimple, and the Benedictines of the Holy Sacrament and of the Rue Neuve Sainte Geneviève wore a white one, and had also on their breast a Holy Sacrament, about three inches in length, of silver or copper-gilt. The nuns of the Petit-Picpus did not wear this crucifix. The Perpetual Adoration, common to Petit-Picpus and the Temple house, leaves the two orders perfectly distinct. This practice is the only similarity between the Ladies of the Holy Sacrament and the Bernardines of Martin Verga, in the same way as there was a similitude, for the study and glorification of all the mysteries attaching to the infancy, the life and the death of Jesus Christ, between

two orders widely separated and at times hostile,—the Oratory of Italy, established at Florence by Philippe de Neri, and the Oratory of France, established in Paris by Pierre de Bérulle. The Oratory of Paris claimed precedence, Philippe de Neri being only a saint, while Bérulle was a cardinal.

But to return to the harsh Spanish rule of Martin Verga.

The Bernardo-Benedictines of this obedience abstain from meat the whole year; fast all Lent, and on many other days, special to themselves; get up in their first sleep, from one in the morning until three, to read their breviary and chant matins; sleep in serge sheets at all seasons, and on straw; use no baths, light no fires; scourge themselves every Friday; observe the rule of silence; only speak to one another during recreations, which are very short, and wear sackcloth chemises for six months, from September 14, which is the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, up to Easter. These six months are a moderation,—the rule says all the year, but the sackcloth chemise, insupportable in the heat of summer, produced fevers and nervous spasms. It became necessary to limit its use. Even with this relief, when the nuns put on this chemise on September 14, they suffer from fever for three or four days. Obedience,

poverty, chastity, continuance in cloister—such are their vows, which are greatly aggravated by the rules.

The prioress is elected for three years by the mothers, who are called *vocal mothers*, because they have a voice in the chapter. A prioress can be re-elected but twice, which fixes the longest possible reign of a prioress at nine years.

They never see the officiating priest, who is always concealed from them by a baize curtain nine feet high. At the sermon, when the preacher is in the chapel, they draw their veils over their faces; they must always speak low, walk with their eyes on the ground and their heads bowed down. Only one man is allowed to enter the convent, the diocesan archbishop.

There is indeed one other, the gardener; but he is always an aged man, and in order that he may be constantly alone in the garden, and that the nuns may be warned and avoid him, a bell is fastened to his knee.

The nuns must display absolute and passive submission to the prioress. It is canonical subjection in all its self-denial. They must obey as if it were the voice of Christ, *ut voci Christi*, at a nod, at the first signal, *ad nutum, ad primum signum;* at once, cheerfully, perseveringly, and with a certain blind obedience, *prompté, hilariter, perseveranter, et cæcâ*

quâdam obedientiâ; like the file in the workman's hand, *quasi limam in manibus fabri,* forbidden to read or write without express permission, *legere vel scribere non ediscerit sine expressâ superioris licentiâ.*

Each of them performs in turn what they call the "reparation." This Reparation is a prayer for all sins, faults, irregularities, violations, iniquities, and crimes committed upon the earth. For twelve consecutive hours, from four in the evening till four the next morning, or from four in the morning till four in the afternoon, the sister who performs the Reparation remains on her knees, on the stone before the Holy Sacrament, with her hands clasped, and a rope around her neck. When fatigue becomes insupportable, she prostrates herself with her face on the ground, and her arms forming a cross,—that is her sole relief. In this attitude she prays for all the guilty in the universe. This is grand, almost sublime.

As this act is performed in front of a stake on the top of which a wax candle is burning, it is called either *making reparation,* or *being at the stake.* The nuns, through humility, indeed, prefer the latter expression, which contains an idea of punishment and abasement.

Making reparation is a function in which the whole soul is absorbed. The sister at the

stake would not turn round were a thunderbolt to fall behind her.

Moreover, there is always a nun on her knees before the Holy Sacrament. This station lasts an hour. They relieve each other like soldiers standing sentry. That is the Perpetual Adoration.

The prioresses and the mothers almost always have names of special importance, recalling, not saints and martyrs, but incidents in the life of Christ,—such as Mother Nativity, Mother Conception, Mother Presentation, and Mother Passion. Still the names of saints are not interdicted.

When you see them, you see nothing of them but the mouth. They all have yellow teeth. Never did a tooth-brush enter this convent. Brushing the teeth is the top round of a ladder, the foot of which is: to lose the soul.

They do not call anything *my* or *mine*. They have nothing of their own, and must not be attached to anything. They say of everything *ours*,—thus, our veil, our beads; if they spoke of their chemise they said *our chemise*. Sometimes they grow attached to some trifling object, a book of hours, a relic, or consecrated medal. As soon as they perceive that they are beginning to grow fond of this object they must give it up. They remember the reply of Saint Theresa, to whom a

great lady said, at the moment of entering her order,—"Allow me, my mother, to send for a holy Bible to which I am greatly attached." "Ah, you are still attached to something! in that case do not enter our house."

None are allowed to lock themselves in or to have a *home*, a *room*. They live with open doors. When they pass each other, one says, "Praise and adoration to the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar." The other answers, "Forever." The same ceremony when one raps at another's door. The door is scarcely touched, ere a gentle voice is heard on the other side saying hastily, "Forever!" Like all customs, this one becomes mechanical through habit; and one sometimes says "Forever," before the other has had time to utter the long sentence, "Praise and adoration to the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar!"

Among the Visitandines, the one who enters says "Ave Maria," and the one to whose cell she comes, replies, "Gratiâ plena;" this is their greeting, which is, truly, "full of grace."

At each hour of the day, three supplementary strokes sound from the chapel bell. At this signal, prioress, vocal mothers, professed nuns, lay sisters, novices, and postulants, break off what they are saying, doing, or thinking, and all repeat together—if it be five o'clock, for instance,—"At five o'clock, and at every

hour, praise and adoration to the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar!" If it be eight o'clock: "At eight o'clock, and at every hour," etc., and so on, according to the hour.

This custom, which is intended to break off thoughts and ever lead them back to God, exists in many communities, the form alone varying. Thus, at the Infant-Jesus, they say, "At the present hour, and at every hour, may the love of Jesus enkindle my heart!"

The Bernardo-Benedictines of Martin Verga, cloistered fifty years ago in the Petit-Picpus, chant the offices in a grave psalmody, pure plain chant, and always in a loud voice, during the whole of the service. Whenever there is an asterisk in the missal, they pause, and say in a low voice, "Jesus, Marie, Joseph." In the service for the dead they take such a low pitch, that female voices can scarcely reach it. There results from it a striking and tragical effect. Those of the Petit-Picpus had had a vault made under their high altar for the burial of their community. The *government*, as they call it, would not allow coffins to be placed in this vault. They therefore were taken from the convent when they died. This afflicted and horrified them like a transgression.

They had obtained the slight consolation of being buried at a special hour and in a special corner of the old Vaugirard cemetery, which

was in ground that had once belonged to the community.

On Thursday these nuns heard high mass, vespers, and all the services as on Sunday. They also scrupulously observe all the little festivals, unknown to people of the world, of which the church was formerly so prodigal in France, and still remains so in Spain and Italy. Their attendance at the chapel is interminable. As for the number and length of their prayers, we cannot give a better idea than by quoting the simple remark of one of them,—"The prayers of the postulants are frightful, those of the novices worse, and those of the professed nuns worse still."

Once a week the chapter assembles; the prioress presides, the vocal mothers attend. Each sister comes in turn to kneel on the stone, and confesses aloud, in the presence of all, the faults and sins which she has committed during the week. The vocal mothers consult after each confession, and inflict the penances aloud.

In addition to the open confession, for which all faults at all serious are reserved, they have for venial faults what they call *la coulpe*. To perform the coulpe is to prostrate yourself on your face during service in front of the prioress, until she, who is never addressed except as "our mother," indicates to the sufferer, by a slight tap on the side of

her stall, that she may rise. The coulpe is performed for very trivial things; breaking a glass, tearing a veil, an involuntary delay of a few seconds in attending service, a false note in chapel, etc., these are enough—one must perform the coulpe. The coulpe is quite voluntary; the *culprit* (this word is etymologically in its place here) tries and punishes herself. On festivals and Sundays there are four chorister mothers, who chant at a large lectern with four music stands. One day a chorister mother intoned a psalm, which began with the word *Ecce*, and instead of Ecce, she pronounced in a loud voice the three notes: *ut, si, sol;* for this absence of mind she underwent a coulpe that lasted the whole service. What rendered the fault enormous was, that the chapter laughed.

When a nun is summoned to the locutory, even if it be the prioress, she pulls down her veil in such a way, it will be remembered, as to only show her mouth.

The prioress alone can communicate with strangers: the others can only see their nearest relations, and that very rarely. If, by chance, persons from the outer world request to see a nun whom they have formerly known or loved, a lengthy negotiation is necessary. If it be a woman, the permission may possibly be granted. The nun comes and is spoken to

through the shutters, which are only opened for a mother or a sister. We need hardly say that permission is always refused to men.

Such is the rule of Saint Benedict, made more severe by Martin Verga.

These nuns are not gay, rosy, and fresh, as are often the daughters of other orders. They are pale and serious. Between 1825 and 1830 three of them went mad.

III.

SEVERITIES

One must be at least two years a postulant, sometimes four, and four years a novice. It is rare for the final vows to be taken before the age of twenty-three or twenty-four years. The Bernardo-Benedictines of Martin Verga admit no widows into their order.

In their cells they subject themselves to many unknown self-mortifications, of which they are not allowed to speak.

On the day when a novice takes her final vows, she is dressed in her finest attire, wears a wreath of white roses, has her hair dressed and curled, and then she prostrates herself; a large black veil is spread over her, and the service for the dead is chanted. The then nuns divide into two files, one file passes near her, saying in plaintive accents: "Our sister is dead," and the other file responds in ringing tones: "Living in Jesus Christ!"

At the period to which this story relates, there was a boarding-school attached to the

convent, the pupils being young ladies of noble birth, and generally rich. Among them were Mesdemoiselles de Sainte Aulaire and de Bélisseu, and an English girl, bearing the illustrious Catholic name of Talbot. These young ladies, educated by these nuns between four walls, grew up with a horror of the world and of the century. One of them said to us one day: "To see the pavement of the street made me shudder from head to foot." They were dressed in blue with a white cap, and a silver or copper gilt Holy Spirit upon their breast. On certain high festivals, especially on Saint Martha's day, they were allowed, as a high favor and supreme happiness, to dress themselves like nuns, and perform the offices and ritual of Saint Benedict for the whole day. At first the nuns lent them their black robes. This was deemed a profanity, and the prioress forbade it. The novices alone were permitted to make such loans. It is remarkable that these representations, doubtless tolerated and encouraged in the convent by a secret spirit of proselytism, and in order to give these children some foretaste of the holy dress, were a real happiness and genuine recreation for the scholars. They simply amused themselves. *It was new; it was a change.* Candid reasons of children, which do not succeed, however, in making us worldly-minded people

understand the felicity of holding a holy-water brush in one's hand and standing for hours before a lectern and singing quartettes.

The pupils conformed to all the practices of the convent, though not to all the austerities. There was a young lady who, returning to the world and after being some years married, could not break herself of hastily saying, each time that there was a rap at the door, "Forever!" Like the nuns, the scholars only saw their parents in the locutory. Even their mothers were not allowed to kiss them. To show how far this severity was carried, a young girl was visited one day by her mother, accompanied by a little sister three years of age. The young girl wept, for she would have liked to kiss her sister. Impossible. She implored at least permission for the child to pass her little hand through the bars, that she might kiss it. This was refused, almost as a scandal.

OF THE ASIATIC SOCIE

IV.

GAIETIES

These young girls have none the less filled this grave house with delightful reminiscences.

At certain hours childhood sparkled in this cloister. The bell for recreation rang. A door turned upon its hinges. The birds said: "Good! here are the children!" An irruption of youth inundated this garden, which with its cross walks resembled a pall. Radiant faces, white foreheads, ingenuous eyes, full of gay light—all sorts of dawn—spread through the gloom. After the psalm-singing, the bell-ringing, the tollings, and the services, the noise of little girls, softer than the buzzing of bees, suddenly burst out. The hive of joy opened, and each brought her honey. They played, they called each other, they formed groups, they ran; pretty little white teeth chattered at corners; in the distance veils watched the laughter, shadows guarded the beams,—but what matter! they were radiant, and laughed. These four mournful walls had

their moment of radiance. They too shared, dimly lighted up by the reflection of so much joy, in this gentle buzzing of the swarm. It was like a shower of roses falling on this mourning. The young girls frolicked under the eyes of the nuns; the gaze of sinlessness does not disturb innocence. Thanks to these children, among so many austere hours there was one hour of nature. The little ones skipped, and the larger ones danced. In this cloister play was mingled with heaven. Nothing could be so ravishing and sublime as all the fresh, innocent expansion of these childish souls. Homer might have laughed there with Perrault, and there were, in this dark garden youth, health, noise, cries, uproar, pleasure, and happiness enough to unwrinkle the brows of all grandames, both of the epic poem and the fairy tale, of the throne and the cottage, from Hecuba to Mother Goose.

In this house, more perhaps than elsewhere, were heard those *children's sayings* which have so much grace, and which make the hearer laugh thoughtfully. It was within these four gloomy walls that a child of five years one day exclaimed,—"Mother, a big girl has just told me that I have only nine years and ten months longer to remain here. What happiness!"

Here, too, it was, that this memorable dialogue took place.

A VOCAL MOTHER.—"What are you crying for, my child?"

THE CHILD (six years old), sobbing.—"I said to Alix that I knew my French history. She says that I don't know it, and I do know it."

ALIX, the big one (nine years).—"No. She does not know it."

THE MOTHER.—"How so, my child?"

ALIX.—"She told me to open the book hap-hazard, and ask her a question out of the book, and she could answer it."

"Well?"

"She did not answer it."

"Let us see. What did you ask her?"

"I opened the book anywhere, as she said, and I asked her the first question that I came across."

"And what was the question?"

"It was '*What happened next?*'"

It was there that this profound observation was made about a rather greedy little parrot, which belonged to a lady boarder.

"Is she not nice? She picks off the top of her tart, like a lady."

It was on one of the flagstones of this cloister that was picked up the following confession, written beforehand, so as not to forget it, by a little sinner of seven years of age.

"My father, I accuse myself of having been avaricious.

"My father, I accuse myself of having committed adultery.

"My father, I accuse myself of having raised my eyes to gentlemen."

It was on one of the grassy banks in this garden that the following story was improvised by a rosy mouth of six years, and listened to by blue eyes of four and five years.

"There were three little chickens who lived in a place where there were a great many flowers. They picked the flowers and put them in their pockets. After that they picked the leaves and they put them in their playthings. There was a wolf in the country, and there were many woods; and the wolf was in the woods, and he ate up the little chickens."

And this other poem:

> "There was a blow from a stick.
> It was Punchinello who hit the cat.
> It did not do her any good, it hurt her.
> Then a lady put Punchinello in prison."

It was there, also, that these sweet and heart-rending words were said by a little foundling, a child whom the convent was bringing up out of charity. She heard the others speaking of their mothers, and she murmured in her corner,—

"As for me, my mother was not there when I was born!"

There was a fat portress who was always to be seen hurrying about the corridors, with her bunch of keys, and whose name was Sister Agatha. The *grown-up girls*—those over ten —called her *Agathoclès* (Agathe aux clefs).

The refectory, a large, rectangular room, which only received light through an arched window, on a level with the garden, was gloomy and damp, and, as children say—full of animals. All the surrounding places furnished their contingent of insects.

Each one of the four corners had received a private and expressive name, in the language of the pupils. There was the Spider's corner, the Caterpillar's corner, the Wood-louse's corner, and the Cricket's corner. The Cricket's corner was near the kitchen, and highly esteemed. It was not so cold as the others. The names had passed from the refectory to the school-room, and served to distinguish there, as in the old Mazarin College, four nations. Each pupil belonged to one or other of these nations, according to the corner of the refectory in which she sat at meals. One day the Archbishop, while paying a pastoral visit, noticed a charming little rosy-faced girl, with glorious light hair, come into the class-room where he happened to be, and he asked another pupil, a pretty brunette with pink cheeks, who was near him:

"Who is that?"

"She is a spider, sir."

"Nonsense; and this other?"

"She is a cricket."

"And this one?"

"She is a caterpillar."

"Indeed! and what may you be?"

"I am a woodlouse, Monseigneur."

Each house of this kind has its peculiarities. At the beginning of this century, Ecouen was one of those serene and graceful places where the childhood of young girls was passed in an almost august shade. At Ecouen a distinction was made between the virgins and the flower-girls, in taking rank in the procession of the Holy Sacrament. There were also the "canopies," and the "censers," the former holding the cords of the canopy, the latter swinging the censers in front of the Holy Sacrament. The flowers came by right to the flower-girls. Four "virgins" walked in front. On the morning of the great day, it was not uncommon to hear the question in the dormitory,—"Who is a virgin?"

Madame Campan mentions this remark of a "little girl" of seven to a "big girl" of sixteen, who walked at the head of the procession, while she, the little one, was at the end; "You are a virgin, you are, but I am not."

V.

AMUSEMENTS

Over the refectory door was painted in large black letters the following prayer, which was called the "White Paternoster," and which possessed the virtue of leading persons straight to Paradise:—

"*Petite Paternotre blanche, que Dieu dit, que Dieu fit, que Dieu mit en Paradis. Au soir, m'allant coucher, je trouvis* (sic) *trois anges à mon lit couchés, un aux pieds, deux au chevet, la bonne vierge Marie au milieu qui me dit que je m'y couchis, qui rien ne doutis. Le bon Dieu est mon père, la bonne Vierge est ma mère, les trois apôtres sont mes frères, les trois vierges sont mes sœurs. La chemise où Dieu fut né, mon corps en est enveloppé; la croix Sainte Marguerite à ma poitrine est écrite. Madame la Vierge s'en va sur les champs, Dieu pleurant, recontrit M. Saint Jean. Monsieur Saint Jean, d'où venez-vous? Je viens d'*Ave Salus. *Vous n'avez pas vu le bon Dieu, si est? Il est dans l'arbre dé la Croix, les pieds pendants, les mains clouants, un petit chapeau d'épine blanche sur la tête. Qui la dira trois fois au soir, trois fois au matin gagnera le Paradis à la fin.*"

("Little white Paternoster, which God made, which God said, which God placed in Paradise. At night,

when I went to bed, I finded (*sic*) three angels in my bed,—one at the foot, two at the head, and the good Virgin Mary in the middle,—who told me to go to bed and fear nothing. The good God is my father, the good Virgin is my mother, the three apostles are my brothers, the three virgins are my sisters. The chemise in which God was born, my body is enwrapped in; the cross of Sainte Marguerite is written on my breast. Madame the Virgin, weeping for the Lord, went into the fields and met there Monsieur Saint John. 'Monsieur Saint John, where do you come from?' 'I have come from the *Ave Salus*.' 'You have not seen the Lord, have you?' 'He is on the tree of the cross with hanging feet, nailed-up hands, and a little hat of white-thorn on his head.' Whosoever repeats this, thrice at night and thrice in the morning, will gain Paradise in the end.")

In 1827, this characteristic orison had disappeared beneath a triple coat of whitewash. At the present day it is almost effaced from the memory of those who were young girls then, and old women now.

A large crucifix fastened to the wall completed the decoration of this refectory; whose only door, we believe we have mentioned, opened on the garden. Two narrow tables, with wooden benches on each side, formed two long parallel lines from one end to the other of the refectory. The walls were white, the tables were black; for these two mourning tints are the sole variations in convents. The meals were coarse, and the food of even the children scanty. A single dish, meat and

vegetables, or salt-fish, such was their luxury. This brief bill of fare was, however, an exception reserved for the scholars only. The children ate and held their tongues, under the guardianship of the mother of the week, who, from time to time, if a fly ventured to stir or buzz contrary to regulation, noisily opened and closed a wooden book. This silence was seasoned with the Lives of the Saints, read aloud from a little reading-desk standing at the foot of a crucifix. The reader was a grown-up pupil, appointed for the week. At regular distances on the bare table there were glazed earthen bowls, in which the pupils themselves washed their cups and forks and spoons, and sometimes threw refuse bits, tough meat or spoiled fish, but this was punished. These bowls were called *water-basins.*

Any child who broke the silence made a cross with her tongue. Where? On the ground: she licked the stones. Dust, that finale of all joys, was ordered to chastise these poor little roseleaves that were guilty of prattling.

There was in the convent a book of which only *one copy* was ever printed, and which no one was allowed to read. It is the Rule of Saint Benedict. A mystery which no profane eye must penetrate. *Nemo regulas seu constitutiones nostras externis communicabit.*

The scholars succeeded one day in getting hold of this book and began perusing it eagerly, though frequently interrupted by a fear of being surprised, which made them close the volume hurriedly. They derived small pleasure from the danger they incurred. A few unintelligible pages about the sins of young boys were the "most interesting" that they found.

They played in one walk of the garden, along which were a few stunted fruit trees. In spite of their being constantly watched and the severe punishments, when the wind had shaken the trees, they at times succeeded in picking up furtively a green apple, or a spoiled apricot, or a worm-eaten pear. I will here let a letter speak which I have before me, a letter written five-and-twenty years ago by an ex-pupil, now the Duchesse de ——, one of the most elegant women in Paris. I quote verbatim: "We hide our pear or our apple, as we can. When we go up to spread the covers on our beds before supper we thrust it under a pillow, and eat it at night in bed, and when we cannot do that we eat it in the closet." This was one of their liveliest pleasures.

Once, it was again at the occasion of one of the visits of the Archbishop to the convent, one of the young ladies, Mademoiselle Bouchard, who was related to the Montmorencys, laid a wager that she would ask him for a holi-

day, a dreadful thing in such an austere community. The wager was taken, but not one of those who took it believed in it. When the moment arrived, as the Archbishop was passing before the pupils, Mademoiselle Bouchard, to the indescribable horror of her companions, stepped out of the ranks and said, "Monseigneur, a holiday." Mademoiselle Bouchard was fresh and tall, and had the prettiest little rosy face in the world. M. de Quélen smiled, and said,—"How now, my dear child, a day's holiday! three if you like, I grant three days." The prioress could do nothing, the Archbishop had spoken. It was scandalous for the convent, but joy for the school. Imagine the effect.

The rigid convent, however, was not so well walled in but that the passions of the outer world, that the dramas, that romance even did not penetrate it. To prove this, we will briefly describe a real and incontestable fact, though it is in no way connected with the story which we are narrating. We mention the fact merely to complete the picture of the convent in the reader's mind.

About this period, then, there was in the convent a mysterious personage, who was not a nun, who was treated with great respect, and who was called *Madame Albertine*. Nothing was known about her, except that she was out

of her mind, and that in the world she was supposed to be dead. It was said, that beneath this story were certain pecuniary arrangements, necessary for a grand marriage.

This woman, who was scarce thirty years of age, and a rather handsome brunette, looked vacantly around with her large black eyes. Did she see? it was doubtful. She glided along rather than walked: she never spoke; it was not quite certain that she breathed. Her nostrils were pinched up and livid, as if she had drawn her last sigh. To touch her hand was like touching snow. She had a strange, phantom-like pace. Wherever she entered there was a chill. One day a sister, seeing her pass, said to another, "She is supposed to be dead." "Perhaps she is so," the other replied.

A hundred stories were current about Madame Albertine. She was the eternal object of the curiosity of the pupils. There was in the chapel a gallery, called "*L'œil de Bœuf.*" It was in this place that Madame Albertine attended service. She was usually alone there, because as the gallery was high, the preacher or the officiating priest could be seen from it, which was forbidden to the nuns. One day the pulpit was occupied by a young priest of high rank, the Duke de Rohan, peer of France, officer in the Red Musqueteers in 1815, when

he was Prince de Leon, and who died afterwards in 1830, a cardinal, and archbishop of Besançon. It was the first time that Monsieur de Rohan preached in the convent of the Petit-Picpus. Madame Albertine usually attended the sermons and the services in perfect calmness and complete silence. On that day, as soon as she perceived Monsieur de Rohan, she half rose, and, amid the silence of the chapel, exclaimed aloud, "What! Auguste?" The whole community looked around in stupefaction, the preacher raised his eyes, but Madame Albertine had fallen back into her apathy. A breath from the outer world, a flash of light, had momentarily passed over this set and icy face, then faded away, and the lunatic became again a corpse.

These two words, however, set every body in the convent who could speak to chattering incessantly. What revelations were contained in this "What! Auguste?" Monsieur de Rohan's name was, in point of fact, Auguste. It was evident that Madame Albertine had moved in the highest society, since she knew Monsieur de Rohan; that she had herself occupied an exalted position, since she spoke of so great a nobleman in such a familiar way; that she had some connection with him, of relationship, perhaps, but surely very near, since she knew his Christian name.

Two very strict duchesses, Mesdames de Choiseul and de Serent, frequently visited the community, doubtless by virtue of their privilege as *Magnates Mulieres*, and terribly frightened the school. When the two old ladies came along, all the poor girls trembled and lowered their eyes.

Monsieur de Rohan was, besides, unwittingly the object of attention among the pupils. He had just been appointed, while waiting for a bishopric, grand vicar of the Archbishop of Paris. It was one of his habits to serve mass in the chapel of the nuns of the Petit-Picpus. Not one of the young recluses could see him, on account of the baize curtain, but he had a gentle and penetrating voice, which they managed to recognize and distinguish. He had been a Mousquetaire; besides, he was said to be somewhat of a dandy, with fine chestnut hair curled round his head, and a wide scarf of magnificent moire, and his black cassock cut in the most elegant style. He greatly occupied all their youthful imaginations.

No sound from without penetrated the convent. One year, however, the sound of a flute was heard. It was an event, and the pupils of that day remember it yet.

It was a flute on which some one was playing in the neighborhood. This flute always

played the same air, an air of long-ago, "My Zetulba, come reign o'er my soul," and it could be heard two or three times a day. The young girls passed hours in listening, the vocal mothers were upset, heads grew giddy, punishments were continuous. This lasted for several months. The pupils were all more or less enamored of the unknown musician. Each one fancied herself Zetulba, The sound of the flute came from the direction of the Rue Droit-mur. They would have given anything, compromised anything, attempted anything, in order to see, if only for a moment, the "young man" who played so exquisitely on that flute, and who, without suspecting it, was playing at the same time upon all their hearts. Some of them slipped out through a back door, and climbed up to the third story looking on the Rue Droit-mur, in order to try and see him through the grating. Impossible. One went so far as to reach her arm between the bars above her head and wave her white handkerchief. Two others were even bolder. They managed to climb on to one of the roofs, and run the risk of being seen, and at length succeeded in seeing the "young man." It was an old gentleman of the Emigration, blind and ruined, who played the flute in his garret to while away the time.

VI.

THE LITTLE CONVENT

There were within the walls of Petit-Picpus three perfectly distinct buildings,—the Great Convent, inhabited by the nuns, the School-building, in which the pupils were lodged, and, lastly, what was called the Little Convent. The latter was a detached building with a garden, in which all sorts of old nuns of various orders, the remains of convents broken up in the Revolution, dwelt in common; a reunion of all the black, white, and gray gowns of all the communities, and all the varieties possible; what might be called, were such a conjunction of words permissible, a conventual *pot-pourri.*

Under the Empire all these dispersed and homeless women were allowed to shelter themselves under the wings of the Bernardo-Benedictines. The government paid them a small pension; the ladies of the Petit-Picpus received them eagerly. It was a strange mixture. Each followed her own rule. At times the

pupils were allowed, as a great recreation, to pay them a visit; so that these young minds retained a recollection, among other things, of Holy Mother Bazile, of Holy Mother Scholastica, and of Mother Jacob.

One of these refugees was almost at home here. She was a nun of Saint Aure, the only one of her order alive. The former convent of the ladies of Saint Aure occupied, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, precisely the house which, later, belonged to the Benedictines of Martin Verga. This holy woman, too poor to wear the magnificent dress of her order, which was a white robe with a scarlet scapulary, had piously dressed in it a small doll, which she was fond of showing, and which, at her death, she bequeathed to the house. In 1824, there remained only one nun of this order; at the present day there remains only a doll.

In addition to these worthy mothers, a few old ladies of the world, like Madame Albertine, had obtained permission from the prioress to retire into the Little Convent. Among the number were Madame de Beaufort d'Hautpoul and the Marquise Dufresne. Another was only known in the convent by the formidable noise she made in blowing her nose. The pupils called her Madame Racketini.

About 1820 or 1821, Madame de Genlis,

who edited at that period a small periodical called *L'Intrepide*, asked permission to occupy a room in the convent of the Petit-Picpus. Monsieur the Duke of Orleans recommended her. There was a commotion in the hive; the vocal mothers were all in a tremor; Madame de Genlis had written romances; but she declared that she was the first to detest them, and moreover she had reached her phase of wild devotion. By the help of Heaven, and of the prince, she entered. She went away at the end of six or eight months, giving as a reason that the garden had no shade. The nuns were delighted. Although very old, she still played the harp, and remarkably well.

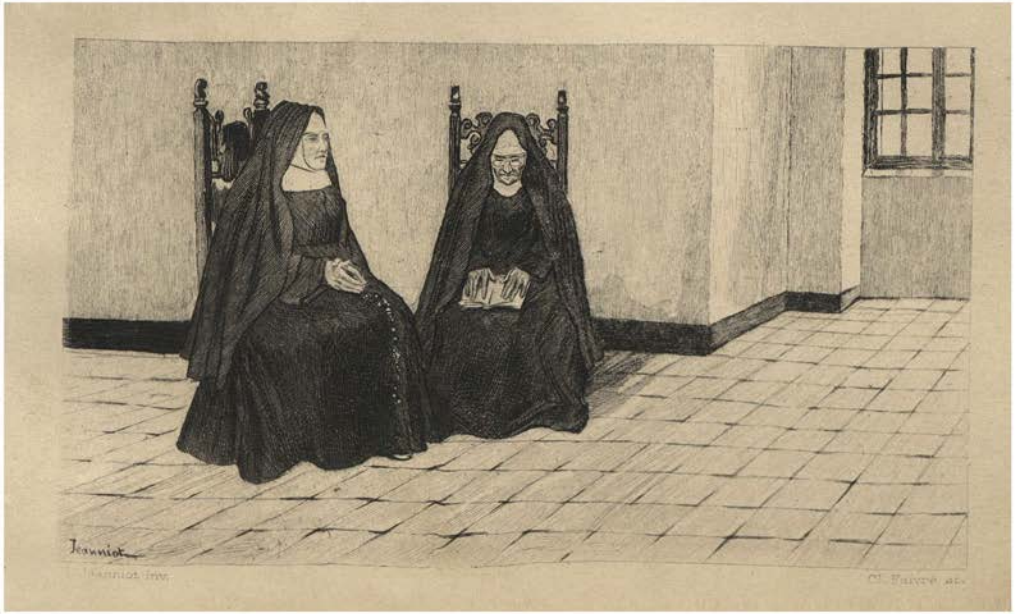
When she went away she left her mark on her cell. Madame de Genlis was superstitious and a Latin scholar. These two terms give a very fair idea of her. A few years ago there still might be seen, pasted up inside a small cupboard of her cell, in which she kept her money and jewelry, the following five Latin lines, written in her own hand with red ink on yellow paper, and which, in her opinion, possessed the virtue of frightening away robbers:

"*Imparibus meritis pendent tria corpora ramis:*
Dismas et Gesmas, media est divina potestas:
Alta petit Dismas, infelix, infima, Gesmas:
Nos et res nostras conservet summa potestas.
Hos versus dicas, ne tu furto tua perdas."

These verses, in sixteenth-century Latin, raise the question whether the two thieves of Calvary were called, as is commonly believed, Demas and Gestas, or Dismas and Gesmas. The latter orthography would thwart the claims made in the last century by the Viscomte de Gestas, to being a descendant of the wicked thief. However, the convenient virtue attached to these verses is an article of faith in the order of the Hospitaler nuns.

The church of the establishment, so built as to separate entirely the Great Convent from the School-building, was common to the School, and the Great and Little Convents. The public even were admitted there by a sort of beggarly entrance from the street. But every thing was arranged so that not one of the inmates of the convent could see a single face from the outer world. Imagine a church whose choir was seized by a gigantic hand, and bent around in such a way as no longer to form, as in ordinary chapels, a prolongation behind the altar, but a sort of obscure room or cavern on the right-hand of the officiating priest; imagine this hall closed by the curtain, seven feet high, to which we have referred; heap together in the shadow of this curtain, upon wooden seats, the nuns on the left, the pupils on the right, the lay sisters and novices in the rear,—and you will have some

idea of the nuns of the Petit-Picpus attending divine service. This cavern, which was called the choir, communicated with the convent by a covered passage. The church was lighted from the garden. When the nuns were present at those services at which their rules commanded silence, the public was advised of their presence only by the sound of the wooden kneeling-benches rising and falling noisily.


Jeanniot

The Prioress and Mother Cineres.—Cosette, Vol. II., 147.

VII.

A FEW PROFILES FROM THE SHADOW

During the six years between 1819 and 1825 the prioress of the Petit-Picpus was Mademoiselle de Blêmeur, called in religion Mother Innocent. She belonged to the family of that Marguerite de Blémeur, who was authoress of the "Lives of the Saints of the Order of Saint Benedict." She had been re-elected. She was about sixty, short, stout, and with a voice "like a cracked pot," says the letter from which we have already quoted; but an excellent creature, the only merry soul in the convent, and on that account adored.

She followed in the foot-steps of her ancestress Marguerite, the Dacier of the order. She was well-read, erudite, learned, competent, versed in the curiosities of history, stuffed with Latin, crammed with Greek, full of Hebrew, and more a monk than a nun.

The sub-prioress was an old Spanish nun, almost blind, Mother Cineres.

The most esteemed among the "vocals" were, Mother Sainte Honorine, the treasurer; Mother Sainte Gertrude, first mistress of the novices; Mother Sainte Ange, second mistress; Mother Annunciation, Sacristan; Mother Sainte Augustine, nurse, the only one in the whole convent who was ill-natured; then Mother Sainte Mechtilde (Mlle. Gauvain), who was young, and had an admirable voice; Mother des Auges (Mlle. Drouet), who had been in the convent of the Filles Dieu, and the convent of the Trésor, near Gisors; Mother Sainte Joseph (Mlle. de Cogolludo); Mother Sainte Adelaide (Mlle. D'Auverney); Mother Miséricorde (Mlle. de Cifuentes, who could not endure the privations); Mother Compassion (Mlle. de La Miltière, received at the age of sixty, in spite of the rules, but very rich); Mother Providence (Mlle. de Laudinière); Mother Presentation (Mlle. de Siguenza), who was prioress in 1847; and lastly, Mother Sainte Celigne (sister of Cerachhi the sculptor), who went mad; and Mother Sainte Chantal (Mlle. de Suzon), who also went mad.

Among the prettiest was a charming girl of three-and-twenty, who belonged to the Bourbonnais, and was descended from the Chevalier Roze, who was called in the world Mlle. Roze, and who called herself Mother Assumption.

Mother Sainte Mechtilde, who had charge

of the singing and the choir, was glad to make use of the pupils for this purpose. She generally selected a complete musical scale, that is to say, seven assorted voices, from ten to sixteen years inclusive, whom she had sing, standing in a row, ranging from the shortest to the tallest. This presented to the eye something like pipes of young girls, a sort of Pan's flute, composed of angels.

The lay sisters, whom the pupils liked best, were Sister Sainte Euphrasie, Sister Sainte Marguerite, Sister Sainte Marthe, who was childish, and Sister Sainte Michel, at whose long nose they laughed.

All these women were kind to all these children. The nuns were only severe with themselves. There were fires only in the School building, and the food there was luxurious when compared with that of the convent. Only, when a child passed by a nun and spoke to her, the nun never answered.

This rule of silence had this result, that, in the whole convent, language was withdrawn from human creatures and given to inanimate objects. At one moment it was the church bell that spoke, at another the gardener's. A very sonorous gong, placed by the side of the portress, and which could be heard all through the house, indicated by various strokes, which were a sort of acoustic

telegraphy, all the acts of material life to be accomplished, and summoned, if required, to the locutory, this or that inhabitant of the house. Each person and each thing had its special ring. The prioress had one and one; the sub-prioress one and two; six-five announced recitation hour, so that the pupils never spoke of going to recitation, but of going to six-five. Four-four was Madame Genlis' signal, and, as it was heard very often, uncharitable persons said it was the "devil's four." Nineteen strokes announced a great event,—it was the opening of the cloister door, a terrible iron plate all bristling with bolts, which only turned on its hinges before the Archbishop.

As we have said, excepting he and the gardener, no man entered the convent. The pupils, however, saw two others,—one was the chaplain, Abbé Banès, an old ugly man, whom they were allowed to contemplate in the choir through a grating; the other, Monsieur Ansiaux, the drawing-master, whom the letter, which we have already quoted, calls "M. Anciot," and describes as an "odious old hunchback."

This shows that the men were all carefully selected.

Such was this curious house.

VIII.

POST CORDA LAPIDES

After sketching its moral features, it may not be amiss to indicate in a few words the material configuration, of which the reader already possesses some idea.

The convent of the Petit-Picpus-Saint-Antoine occupied nearly the whole of a large trapezium, formed by the intersecting of the Rue Polonceau, the Rue Droit-mur, the Petite Rue Picpus, and the built-up alley, called in the old plans Rue Aumarais. These four streets surrounded it like a moat. The convent was composed of several buildings and a garden. The main building, taken as a whole, was a juxtaposition of hybrid constructions, which, in a bird's eye view, would very exactly form a gallows laid on the ground. The long arm of the gallows extended along the whole portion of the Rue Droit-mur, comprised between the Petite Rue Picpus and the Rue Polonceau, while the shorter arm was a tall, gray, stern, grated

façade, looking on the Petite Rue Picpus, of which the *porte cochère*, number sixty-two, was the extremity. Toward the centre of this façade dust and ashes had whitened an old, low-arched gate, where the spiders made their webs, and which was only opened for an hour or two on Sundays, and on the rare occasions when the coffin of a nun left the convent. This was the public entrance of the church. The elbow of the gallows was a square room, which served as a pantry, and which the nuns called the "expense." In the long arm were the cells of the mothers, sisters, and novices. In the short arm the kitchens, the refectory, along which a cloister ran, and the church. Between the door of number sixty-two and the corner of the closed Aumarais lane was the school, which could not be seen from the exterior. The rest of the trapezium formed the garden, which was much lower than the level of the Rue Polonceau, and this caused the walls to be much loftier inside than out. The garden, which was slightly arched, had at its centre on the top of a mound a fine-pointed and conical fir-tree, from which ran, as from the boss of a shield, four large walks, with eight smaller ones arranged two and two, so that, had the enclosure been circular, the geometrical plan of the walks would have resembled a cross

laid upon a wheel. The walks, which all ran to the extremely irregular walls of the garden, were of unequal length. They were bordered with gooseberry bushes. At the end, a walk bordered with large poplars ran from the ruins of the old convent, which was at the corner of the Rue Droit-mur, to the Little Convent, which was at the corner of Aumarais lane. In front of the Little Convent was what was called the small garden. Add to this general whole, a court-yard, all sorts of corners and angles which composed the inside buildings, and prison walls, the only perspective which met the eye being the long black line of roofs which ran along the other side of the Rue Poloncceau, and thus you can imagine to yourself a perfect picture of what the house of the Bernardines of Petit-Picpus was five-and-forty years ago. This holy house was built precisely on the site of a tennis court, which was famous from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, called "The court of the eleven thousand devils."

All these streets, indeed, were among the oldest in Paris; these names Droit-mur and Aumarais are very old, but the streets that bear them are much more ancient. Aumarais lane was at one time called Maugout lane; the Rue Droit-mur was called the Rue des Eglantines, for God opened the flowers before man chiseled stones.

IX.

A CENTURY UNDER A WIMPLE

Since we are about to describe in detail what was heretofore the Convent of the Petit-Picpus, and since we have dared also to look in upon this mysterious shelter, the reader will permit us another slight digression, although, perhaps, it has nothing to do with the story. It is however characteristic and useful in so far as it proves that a convent can have its original people. There was in the *Petit-Couvent* a centenarian, who came from the abbey of Fontevrault. Before the Revolution she had been a woman of the world. She spoke often of M. de Miromesnil, Keeper of the Seals under Louis XVI, and of the wife of President Duplat, who had been a great friend of hers. It was her pleasure and pride to drag in these two names on every possible occasion. She related marvelous stories about the abbey of Fontevrault, that it was like a town, and that there were streets in the monastery. She spoke with a Picard accent which

amused the pupils. Every year she renewed her vows, and at the moment of taking the oath she would say to the priest: "Monseigneur Saint Francis took it to Monseigneur Saint Julien, Monseigneur Saint Julien took it to Monseigneur Saint Eusebius, Monseigneur Saint Eusebius took it to Monseigneur Saint Procopius, etc., etc., and thus, my father, I take it to you." And the pupils would laugh, not in their sleeves, but under their veils; a charming little suppressed laugh, which made the vocal mothers frown.

At other times the centenarian told anecdotes. She said that in her youth the Bernardines did not yield precedence to the Musqueteers. It was a century that spoke, but it was the eighteenth century. She described the Champenois and Burgundian custom of the four wines before the Revolution. When a great personage, a marshal of France, a prince, a duke, or a peer, passed through a town of Champagne or Burgundy, the town authorities came and addressed him, and presented him with four silver goblets filled with four different kinds of wine. On the first goblet was the inscription "monkey-wine," on the second "lion-wine," on the third "sheep-wine," and on the fourth "hog-wine." These four inscriptions expressed the four stages of intoxication—the first that which

enlivens, the second that which irritates, the third that which stupefies, and, finally, the fourth that which brutalizes.

She had a mysterious object, to which she was greatly attached, locked up in a cupboard.

The rule of Fontevrault did not forbid this. She would not show it to any one. She locked herself in, which she was also permitted, and hid herself each time that she desired to see it. If she heard footsteps in the passage she would close the cupboard as hastily as she could with her aged hands. So soon as it was alluded to, she, who was so fond of talking, held her tongue. The most curious were defeated by her silence, and the most tenacious by her obstinacy. This also was a subject of comment for all the idlers and gossips in the convent. What could this precious and hidden thing be which was the centenarian's treasure? Some pious book? without doubt, or unique rosary? or venerable relic? They lost themselves in conjectures. On the poor woman's death they ran to the cupboard, more quickly perhaps than was befitting, and opened it. They found the object under three folds of linen, as though it were a blessed paten.

It was a Faïence plate representing Cupids flying away, and pursued by apothecaries' apprentices armed with enormous syringes.

The pursuit is full of comical grimaces and postures. One of the charming little Cupids is already impaled; he writhes, flutters his wings, and strives to fly away, but the lad, capering about, laughs a satanic laugh. Moral —love conquered by colic. This plate, which is very curious, and perhaps had the honor of giving an idea to Molière, still existed in September, 1845; it was for sale at a bric-a-brac shop on the Boulevard Beaumarchais.

This good old woman would not receive any visitors, "because," as she said, "the locutory is too melancholy."

X.

THE ORIGIN OF THE PERPETUAL ADORATION

This almost sepulchral locutory, which we have attempted to describe, is a thoroughly local feature, which is not reproduced with the same severity in other convents. In the convent of the Rue du Temple, for instance, which, it is true, belonged to another order, the black shutters were replaced by brown curtains, and the locutory itself was a room with a hard wood floor and with white muslin curtains at the windows, while on the walls were hung all sorts of pictures,—the portrait of a Benedictine nun with uncovered face, painted bouquets, and even a Turk's head.

It was in the garden of this convent of the Rue du Temple that the chestnut tree grew, which was considered the handsomest and largest in France, and which had, among the worthy folk of the eighteenth century, the name of "the father of all the chestnut trees in the kingdom."

As we said, this convent of the temple was

occupied by Benedictines of the Perpetual Adoration, who differed greatly from those Benedictines who descended from Citeaux. This order of the Perpetual Adoration is not very old, and does not date back beyond two hundred years. In 1649 the Holy Sacrament was twice profaned at an interval of a few days, in two churches in Paris, at Saint Sulpice and at Saint Jean en Grève, a rare and terrible sacrilege which roused the whole city. The Prior Grand-vicar of Saint Germain-des-Près ordained a solemn procession of all his clergy, at which the Papal Nuncio officiated. But this expiation was not sufficient for two worthy ladies, Madame Courtin, Marquise de Boucs, and the Countess de Châteauvieux. This outrage, done to the "most august Sacrament of the Altar," though transient, would not pass from these pious souls, and it seemed to them that it could alone be expiated by a "perpetual adoration" in some nunnery. Both of them, one in 1652 and the other in 1653, gave large sums of money to Mother Catharine de Bar, surnamed "of the Holy Sacrament," a Benedictine nun, for the purpose of founding, for this pious object, a convent of the order of Saint Benedict; the first permission for this foundation was given to Mother Catharine de Bar by M. de Metz, Abbé of Saint Germain, "on condition that no person shall be received

unless she brings a pension of three hundred livres, which is six thousand livres of principal." After the Abbé of Saint Germain, the king granted letters-patent, and the whole, abbatial charter and letters-royal, was confirmed in 1654 by the Chamber of Accounts and the Parliament.

Such are the origin and legal consecration of the establishment of the Benedictines of the Perpetual Adoration of the Holy Sacrament at Paris. Their first convent was "built new," in the Rue Cassette, with the funds of Mesdames de Boucs and Châteauvieux.

This order, as we see, must not be confounded with the Benedictines called Cistercians. It was a dependency of the Abbé of Saint Germain-des-Près, in the same manner as the ladies of the Sacred Heart are dependents of the General of the Jesuits, and the Sisters of Charity, of the General of the Lazarists.

It was also entirely different from the order of the Bernardines of the Petit-Picpus, of which we have just shown the inner life. In 1657, Pope Alexander VII, by a special bull, authorized the Bernardines of the Petit-Picpus to practise the Perpetual Adoration like the Benedictines of the Holy Sacrament. But the two orders, none the less, remained distinct.

XI.

END OF THE PETIT-PICPUS

From the beginning of the Restoration, the convent of the Petit-Picpus had dwindled away; it shared in the general decay of the order which, after the eighteenth century, came upon all religious orders. Contemplation, like unto prayer, is a want of humanity; but, like all that the Revolution has touched, it will be transformed, and from being opposed to human progress will become favorable to it.

The house of the Petit-Picpus became rapidly depopulated. In 1840, the little convent had disappeared and the school had disappeared. There were no longer either old women or young girls; the former were dead, the latter had gone away. *Volaverunt.* The rule of the Perpetual Adoration is so strict that it terrifies; the inclination is driven back, and the order is not recruited. In 1845 a few lay sisters were still found here and there, but no nuns of the choir. Forty years ago there were nearly one hundred nuns; fifteen years ago

there were only twenty-eight. How many are there to-day? In 1847 the prioress was young, a sign that the choice was becoming limited. In proportion as the number diminishes the fatigue is increased; the duties of each become harder to bear; one sees in the near future the time when there will be only a dozen sore and bent shoulders to bear the heavy rule of Saint Benedict. The burden is implacable, and remains the same for the few as for the many. It used to press, now it crushes. Hence they die. At the time when the author of this book still resided in Paris, two died. One twenty-five, the other twenty-three, years of age. The latter might have said, like unto Julia Alpinula, *Hic jaco. Vixi annos viginti et tres.* It is owing to this decadence that the convent has given up the education of girls.

We are unable to pass by this extraordinary, unknown, and obscure house without entering it, and leading in those who accompany us and who listen to what we relate—we trust with advantage to some—the melancholy story of Jean Valjean. We have penetrated into this community so full of those old practices which seem so strange at the present day. It is a closed garden. *Hortus conclusus.* We have spoken of this singular spot in detail, but with respect, in as far as respect and detail are compatible. We may not comprehend it all, we have insulted nothing.

BOOK SEVEN

A PARENTHESIS

I.

THE CONVENT, AN ABSTRACT IDEA

This book is a drama, the first character of which is the Infinite.

Man is the second.

This being so, when a convent is found in our path we have a right to enter it. Why? Because the convent which is common to the East as well as to the West, to ancient as well as to modern times, to Paganism as well as to Buddhism, to Mahometanism as well as to Christianity, is one of the optical instruments turned by man on the Infinite.

This is not the place for development at length of certain ideas; however, whilst strictly maintaining our reservations, our restrictions, and at times restraining our indignation, we must say that whensoever we encounter the Infinite in man (well or badly understood) we feel ourselves compelled to respect it. There is in the synagogue, in the pagoda and in the wigwam, a hideous side which we execrate and a sublime side which we adore. What a source of contemplation for the soul and what meditation without bound. The reflection of God upon the human wall.

II.

THE CONVENT, AN HISTORIC FACT

In the light of history, reason, and truth, monastic life stands condemned. Monasteries, when they are numerous in the country, are stoppages in the circulation; encumbering establishments, and centres of idleness where there should be centres of industry. Monastic communities are to the social community what the ivy is to the oak; what a wart is to the human body. Their prosperity and their fatness are the impoverishment of the country. Monastic régime, good at the birth of civilization; useful in the reduction of brutality by the development of the spiritual, is injurious to the manhood of nations. Particularly when, relaxed and entered upon its period of decay, it continues to set an example, it becomes harmful for the same reasons that made it salutary in its period of purity. These withdrawals into convents and monasteries had their day. Cloisters, although beneficial in the first training of modern civilization, have

cramped its growth and are injurious to its development. Regarded as an institution, and as a method of culture for man, monasteries, good in the tenth century, questionable in the fifteenth, are detestable in the nineteenth. The leprosy of monasticism has eaten, almost to a skeleton, two glorious nations—Italy and Spain—one the light and the other the splendor and glory of Europe for centuries, and at the present time the regeneration of these two illustrious peoples is beginning, thanks to the sound and vigorous hygiene of 1789.

The convent, the old style convent of women, particularly, as it still appeared on the threshold of the present century, in Italy, in Austria, and in Spain, is one of the gloomiest concretions of the Middle Ages. The cloister, that is, the cloister as there beheld, was the intersecting point of many horrors. The Catholic cloister, properly so called, is filled with the black effulgence of death.

The Spanish convent is, beyond all others, desolate. There rise, in the obscurity, beneath vaults filled with mist, beneath domes dim with thick shadow, massive Babel-like altars, lofty as cathedrals; there hang by chains, in the deep gloom, immense white crucifixes; there are stretched, naked, on the ebon wood, great ivory Christs, more than

bloody, bleeding, hideous yet magnificent, the bones protruding from the elbows, the knee-pans disclosing the integuments, the wounds showing the raw flesh, crowned with thorns of silver, held up with nails of gold, with blood drops of rubies on their brows, and tears of diamonds in their eyes. The diamonds and rubies seem like real blood and tears; and down below there, in the shadow, make veiled unfortunates weep, whose loins are scratched and torn with hair-cloth and scourges set with iron points, whose breasts are bruised with wicker pads, and whose knees are lacerated by the continuous attitude of prayer; women who deem themselves wives; spectres who fancy themselves seraphim. Do these women think? No. Have they a will? No. Do they love? No. Do they live? No. Their nerves have become bone; their bones have become stone. Their veil is the woven tissue of the night. Their breath, beneath that veil, is like some indescribable tragic respiration of death itself. The abbess, a phantom, sanctifies and terrifies them. The immaculate is there, repulsive. Such were the old convents of Spain. Dens of terrible devotion; lairs of virgins; savage places.

Catholic Spain was more Roman than Rome herself. The Spanish convent was beyond all others the Catholic convent. Everything

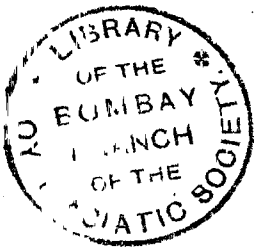
savored of the East. The Archbishop, as Kislar-aga of heaven, locked up and kept watch over this seraglio of souls set apart for God. The nun was the odalisque, the priest was the eunuch. The fervently devout were, in their dreams, chosen and possessed of Christ. At night, the beautiful naked youth descended from the cross and became the ecstasy of the cell. High walls guarded from every distraction of real life the mystic sultana who had the Crucified One for a sultan. A glance outside was an infidelity. The *in-pace* took the place of the leather sack. That which they threw into the sea in the East, they cast into the earth in the West. On either side, women wrung their hands; the waves for some, the pit for others; on one side the drowned, on the other the buried alive. Monstrous parallelism.

To-day, the upholders of the past, not being able to deny these things, have adopted the alternative of smiling at them. They have made it the fashion, a strange but convenient one, to suppress the revelations of history, to invalidate the comments of philosophy, and to evade all embarrassing facts and all gloomy inquiries. *Topics for declamations*, say the clever ones. *Declamations*, echo the simpletons. Jean Jacques, a declaimer; Diderot, a declaimer. I do not remember who it is that

has at last found out that Tacitus also was a declaimer, that Nero was a victim, and that most decidedly we must be moved with pity for "that poor Holofernes."

Facts, however, are obstinate, and not easy to disprove. The author of this book has seen with his own eyes, about eight leagues from Brussels, a specimen of the Middle Ages, within reach of every one, at the Abbey of Villars, the openings of the secret dungeons in the middle of the meadow that was once the courtyard of the cloister, and, on the bank of the Dyle, four stone dungeons, part underground, part under water. These were *in-pace*. Each one of these dungeons has a remnant of an iron door, a closet, and a grated opening, which, on the outside, is two feet above the river, and, on the inside, is six feet above the floor. Four feet of river water flows along the outer face of the wall, the floor is always wet. The occupants of the *in-pace* had only this wet ground for a bed. In one of these dungeons there is the fragment of a carcanet (an iron collar) fastened to the wall; in another may be seen a sort of square box formed of four slabs of granite, too short for one to lie down, too low for one to stand erect. In there they put a human being and closed the top with a slab of stone. It is there. One may see it. One may touch it. These *in-*

pace, these dungeons, these iron hinges, these carcanets, these overhead openings close to which flows the river, this box of stone closed with a cover of granite as though it were a tomb, with this difference, that here the dead were alive, this floor of mud, this cesspool, these walls that ooze. What declaimers!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III.

UPON WHAT CONDITION ONE CAN RESPECT THE PAST

Monasticism, as it existed in Spain, and as it now is in Thibet, is to civilization a sort of phthisis. It stops life completely. In short, it depopulates. Monastic incarceration means castration. It has been the scourge of Europe. Add to that the violence so often done to the conscience, the forced vocation, feudalism leaning on the cloister, primogeniture turning into the monastery the surplus of the family, the ferocious cruelties of which we have just spoken, the *in-pace*, mouths closed, brains walled in, so many hapless intellects buried in the dungeon of eternal vows, the donning of the gown, the burying alive of souls. Add the individual torments to the degradation of the nation, and whosoever you may be, you will feel yourself tremble before the gown and the veil, those two winding sheets of human fabrication.

For all that, on certain conditions and in certain places, in despite of philosophy and in despite of progress, the monastic spirit perse-

veres in the full light of the nineteenth century; a singular revival of asceticism, at this very moment, amazes the civilized world. The persistence with which superannuated institutions attempt to perpetuate themselves, resembles the obstinacy of a rancid odor clinging to the hair, the pretension of spoiled fish which insists on being eaten, the folly of a child's garment trying to clothe a man, and the tenderness of a corpse which returns to embrace the living.

Ingrate! cries the garment, I sheltered you in your weakness, why do you now cast me off? I come from the open sea, says the fish. I was a rose, cries the perfume. I have loved you, pleads the corpse. I have civilized you, says the convent.

To this there is but one reply: In the past.

To even dream of the indefinite prolongation of things dead, and the government of men by embalming, to restore dilapidated dogmas, to regild the shrines, to replaster the cloisters, to reconsecrate the reliquaries, to revive superstitions, to replenish fanaticisms, to put in new handles and patch up the sprinkling brushes, to reconstitute monasticism and military rule, to believe in the salvation of society by the multiplying of parasites, to foist the past on the present, seems strange. There are, however, advocates for such theories. These theorists, men of mind too, in other

things, have a very simple process, they apply to the past a coating which they term social order, divine right, morality, family, veneration of our ancestors, time-honored authority, sacred tradition, legitimacy, religion; and they go about shouting:—See! take this, good people.—This sort of logic was familiar to the ancients. Their soothsayers practised it. They would rub a black heifer with chalk, and say: She is white. *Bos cretatus.*

As for ourselves, we distribute our respect here and there, and spare the past entirely, provided it but consent to be dead. But if it insists upon being alive, we attack it, and endeavor to kill it.

Superstitions, bigotries, hypocrisies, prejudices, these phantoms, phantoms though they be, are tenacious of life. They have teeth and nails in their shadowy substance, and we must grapple with them, body to body, and make war upon them, and that without cessation, for it is one of the fatalities of humanity to be condemned to eternal struggle with phantoms. A shadow is hard to seize by the throat and dash to the ground.

A convent in France, in the full light of the nineteenth century, is a college of owls confronting the day. A cloister, in the open act of asceticism in the midst of the city of '89, of 1830, and of 1848. Rome blooming forth in

Paris, is an anachronism. In ordinary times to disperse any anachronism and cause it to vanish, one has only to make it spell the year of our Lord. But we do not live in ordinary times.

Let us attack.

Let us attack, but let us discriminate. The characteristic of truth is never to run into excess. What need has she of exaggeration? There are some things which must be destroyed and some things which must merely be cleared up and investigated. What force in a courteous and serious examination. Let us not carry flame where light alone will suffice.

Well, assuming that we are in the nineteenth century, we are opposed, as a general proposition, and in every nation, in Asia as well as in Europe, in India as well as in Turkey, to ascetic monasticism. He who says "convent," says "marsh." Their putrescence is apparent, their stagnation is unhealthy, their fermentation enfevers and emaciates the nation, their increase becomes as a plague of Egypt. We cannot, without inquietude, think of those countries where fakirs, bonzes, santons, caloyers, marabouts, talapoins, and dervishes multiply like swarms of vermin.

Having said this, the religious question still remains. This question has some mysterious, almost formidable, sides, which we must be permitted to look at more closely.

IV.

THE CONVENT FROM THE STANDPOINT OF PRINCIPLE

Men come together and live in common. By virtue of what right? By virtue of the right of association.

They shut themselves in their house. By virtue of what right? By virtue of the right possessed by every man to open or shut his door.

They do not go out. By virtue of what right? By virtue of the right to come and go, which implies the right to stay at home.

And what do they do there at home?

They speak in low tones; they keep their eyes fixed on the ground; they work. They renounce the world, cities, sensual enjoyments, pleasures, vanities, pride, interest. They are clothed in coarse wool or linen cloth. Not one of them possesses any property whatever. On entering there, he who was rich makes himself poor. That which he has, he gives to all. He who was what they call a nobleman, a man of rank, a lord, becomes the equal of he

who was a peasant. The cell is the same for all. All undergo the same tonsure, wear the same gown, eat the same black bread, sleep on the same straw, die on the same ashes. The same sackcloth on every back, the same cord around every waist. If it be the rule to go barefooted, all go with naked feet. There may be a prince among them, that prince is a shadow like all the others. Titles there are none. Family names even have disappeared. They have only their Christian names. All are bowed beneath the equality of their baptismal names. They have dissolved the family of the flesh and have formed, in their community, a family of the spirit. They have no relatives save all mankind. They succor the poor; they care for the sick. They elect those whom they are to obey. They address one another by the title: My Brother.

You stop me and exclaim: But that is the ideal monastery.

It is sufficient that it is a possible monastery for me to take it into consideration.

Hence comes it that, in the preceding book, I spoke of a convent with respect. Set aside the Middle Ages; set aside Asia; let the historical and political question be reversed, from the purely philosophical point of view, beyond the necessities of militant polemics, on condition that the monastery be absolutely volun-

tary and contain none but willing inmates, I should always consider the monastic community with a certain serious, and in some respects, deferential attention. Where community is, there exists the body politic; where it exists, there is justice. The monastery is the product of the formula: Equality, Fraternity. Oh! but how great is Liberty! And what a glorious transfiguration! Liberty suffices to transform the monastery into a Republic!

Let us proceed.

But the men, or the women, who are behind these four walls; they dress in sackcloth; they are equal; they call themselves brothers and sisters; that is well; but do they do aught else?

Yes.

What?

They gaze into the gloom, they kneel, and they join their hands.

What does this mean?

V.

PRAYER

They pray.

To whom?

To God.

Pray to God, what is meant by that?

Is there an infinite outside of us? Is this infinite, one, inherent, permanent, necessarily substantial because it is infinite, and that, if matter were wanting to it, it would thereby be restricted; necessarily intelligent, because it is infinite, and that, if it lacked intelligence, it would thereby become finite? Does this infinite awaken in us the idea of essence, whilst we can attribute to ourselves the idea of existence only? In other words, is it not the absolute of which we are the relative?

At the same time, while there is an infinite outside of us, is there not an infinite within us? These two infinites (fearful plural), are they not superimposed one on the other? Is not the second infinite, so to speak, underlying the first? Is it not the mirror, the reflec-

tion, the echo, an abyss concentric to another abyss? Is this second infinite also intelligent? Does it think? Does it love? Does it will? If the two infinites be intelligent, each one of them has a will-principle, and there is a "me" in the infinite above as there is a "me" in the infinite below. The "me" below is the soul; the "me" above is God.

To place, by the process of thought, the infinite below in contact with the infinite above, is called: prayer.

Let us not take away anything from the human mind; suppression is evil. We must reform, and transform. Certain faculties of man are directed toward the Unknown; thought, meditation, prayer. The Unknown is an ocean. What is conscience? It is the guide of the Unknown. Thought, meditation, prayer, these are its great mysterious radiations. Let us respect them. Whither go these majestic irradiations of the soul? Into the shadow, that is, toward the light.

The grandeur of democracy is, that it denies nothing and renounces nothing of humanity. Close by the rights of Man, side by side, at the least, are the rights of the Soul.

To crush out fanaticisms and to revere the Infinite, such is the law. Let us not confine ourselves to lying prostrate beneath the tree of Creation and contemplating its far-spread-

ing branches full of stars. We have a duty to perform, to cultivate the human soul, to defend mystery against miracles, to adore the incomprehensible and to reject the absurd, to admit nothing that is inexplicable except that which is necessary, to purify faith, to take away the superstitions that encumber religion; to remove the caterpillars from the garden of God.

VI.

THE ABSOLUTE EXCELLENCE OF PRAYER

As for the methods of prayer, all are good, provided they be but sincere. Turn your book, face down, and be in the infinite.

There is, as we well know, a philosophy that denies the infinite. There is also a philosophy, classed pathologically, that denies the sun; this philosophy is called blindness.

To set up a sense we lack as a source of truth is a fine piece of blind man's assurance.

The curious part of it is the haughty, superior and compassionate airs assumed by this philosophy, which gropes its way, toward the philosophy which sees God. One seems to hear a mole exclaiming: "How they excite my pity with their talk about a sun!"

There are, we know, illustrious and mighty atheists. These men, after all, led back to truth by their very power, are not absolutely sure of being atheists; it is, with them, but

little more than a matter of definition, and at all events, if they do not believe in God, being great minds, they prove God.

We hail, in them, philosophers, at the same time inexorably disputing their philosophy.

Let us proceed.

An admirable thing, likewise, is this facility of settling up everything with words. A metaphysical school in the North, somewhat impregnated with fog, has imagined that it effected a revolution in the human understanding by substituting for the word "Force" the word "Will."

To say, "the plant wills," in place of "the plant grows;" that would be productive indeed, if one were to add: "the universe wills." Why? Because from that would come this: the plant wills, therefore it has a "me;" the universe wills, therefore it has a God.

To us, however, who, in direct opposition to this school, reject nothing *à priori*, a will in the plant, accepted by this school, appears more difficult to admit than a will in the universe, denied by it.

To deny the will of the infinite, that is to say, God, can only be done on condition of denying the infinite itself. We have demonstrated that.

The denial of the infinite leads directly to

nihilism. Everything becomes "a conception of the mind."

With nihilism no discussion is possible. For the logical nihilist doubts the existence of his questioner, and is not exactly sure that he exists himself.

From his point of view, it is possible that he may be to himself only "a conception of the mind."

Only he does not perceive that all that which he has denied he admits as a whole by merely pronouncing this word: mind.

To sum up, no road is opened by a philosophy which makes everything lead into the monosyllable "No."

To "No" there is but one reply: "Yes."

Nihilism is without scope.

There is no nothing. Zero does not exist. Everything is something. Nothing is nothing.

Man lives by affirmation even more than by bread.

To behold and to show forth, even these will not suffice. Philosophy should be an energy; it should have for its aim and end the amelioration of mankind. Socrates should commingle with Adam and produce Marcus Aurelius; in other words, bring forth from the man of enjoyment the man of wisdom. To change Eden into the Lyceum. Science

should be a cordial. Enjoyment, what a petty aim, what puny ambition. The brute enjoys. To think, that is the true triumph of the soul. To offer thought to the thirst of men, to give to all, as an elixir, the idea of God, to make conscience and science fraternize in them, and, by this mysterious confrontation, to make them just men, such is the duty of true philosophy. Morality is the blossoming forth of truth. Contemplation leads to action. The absolute should be practicable. The ideal must be made air, food and drink for the human mind. It is the ideal which has the right to say: *Take of it, this is my flesh, this is my blood.* Wisdom is a sacred communion. It is upon this condition that it ceases to be a sterile love of science and becomes the one and supreme method by which to rally humanity, and that from a philosophy it is promoted to a religion.

Philosophy should not be a watch-tower built on mystery, from which to gaze at ease upon it, with no other result than to be a convenience for the curious.

Postponing the development of our thought to some other occasion, we will restrict ourselves to saying that we do not comprehend, either man as the starting-point, or progress as the goal, without those two

forces, which are the two motors: faith and love.

Progress is the aim, the ideal is the model.

What is the ideal? It is God.

Ideal, absolute, perfection, infinite; these are the identical words.

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VII.

PRECAUTIONS TO BE TAKEN IN CENSURE

History and philosophy have eternal duties which are, at the same time, simple duties; to oppose Caiaphas as bishop, Draco as judge, Trinalcion as legislator, Tiberius as emperor, that is clear, direct and limpid, and beyond question.

But the right to live apart, even with its inconveniences and its abuses, must be verified and dealt with carefully. Cenobitism is a human problem.

When we speak of convents, those places of error, but of innocence, of misguided views, but of good intentions, of ignorance, but of devotion, of suffering, but of martyrdom, we must nearly always have a "Yes" or "No" upon our lips.

A convent is a contradiction. Its object, salvation; its means, sacrifice. The convent is supreme egotism resulting in supreme self-denial.

"Abdicate, that you may reign" seems to be the device of monasticism.

"In the cloister they suffer that they may enjoy. They draw a bill of exchange on death. They discount celestial light in terrestrial darkness. In the cloister, hell is accepted as an advance charge made on the inheritance of paradise.

The assumption of the veil or gown is a suicide rewarded by an eternity.

It seems to us that, with such a subject, raillery would be out of place. Everything relating to it is serious, the good as well as the evil.

The good man frowns, but never smiles with an evil smile. We can understand anger, but not malignity.

VIII.

FAITH—LAW

A few words more.

We blame the Church when it is saturated with intrigue, we contemn the spiritual when harshly opposed to the temporal; but we everywhere honor the man of thought.

We bow to the man who kneels.

A faith is a necessity to man. Woe to him who believes nothing.

One is not idle because one is absorbed in thought. There is visible labor and there is invisible labor.

To meditate is to labor; to think is to be doing. Folded arms work, joined hands perform. A gaze fixed on heaven is a toil.

Thales remained four years motionless. He founded philosophy.

In our eyes, cenobites are not idlers, recluses are not sluggards.

To meditate upon the Gloom is a serious thing.

Without invalidating anything that we have

just said, we believe that a perpetual remembrance of the tomb is befitting to the living. On this point the priest and the philosopher agree. *We must die.* The Abbé of La Trappe answers Horace.

To mingle with one's life a certain presence of the tomb, is the law of the wise man; and it is the law of the ascetic. In this relation the ascetic and the wise tend toward a common centre.

There is a material advancement; we desire that. There also is a moral grandeur; we hold fast to it.

Unreflecting, headlong minds say:

Of what use are those motionless figures by the side of mystery? What purpose do they serve? What do they effect?

Alas! in the presence of that obscurity which surrounds and awaits us, not knowing what that vast dispersion will do to us, we reply: There is, perhaps, no work more sublime than that which is accomplished by these souls. And we add: There is, perhaps, no labor more useful.

Those who always pray are necessary to those who never pray.

To us, the whole question lies in the amount of thought mingled with the prayer.

Leibnitz praying, that is grand; Voltaire worshipping, that is beautiful. *Deo erexit Voltaire.*

We are for religion against the religions.

We are of those who believe in the pitifulness of orisons and in the sublimity of prayer.

Besides, in this period through which we are passing, a period which happily will leave no trace on the nineteenth century; in this hour when so many men have their heads bowed low and their souls so little uplifted, among so many of the living who have for their motto: enjoyment, and are so fully occupied with the brief and misshapen things of matter, whosoever exiles himself seems to us worthy of veneration. The monastery is a renunciation. Self-sacrifice, even when misdirected, is still self-sacrifice. To accept as a duty, a harsh, though false, doctrine has its own grandeur.

Taken in itself, ideally, and turned to the light of truth until impartially examined on all sides, the monastery, but particularly the convent, for in society, as it now is, woman suffers the most, and in this exile of the cloister there is an element of protest, the convent has unquestionably a certain majesty.

This cloistral existence, so harsh and so gloomy, of which we have just delineated some characteristics, is not life, for it is not liberty; is not the grave, for it is not completion; it is a strange place from which, as

from the top of a high mountain, we perceive on one side the abyss in which we are, and on the other the abyss in which we may be; it is a narrow and misty boundary separating two worlds, at once illuminated and obscured by both, where the enfeebled ray of life mingles with the uncertain ray of death; it is the shadow of the grave.

For ourselves, we, who do not believe what these women believe, but who live, like them, by faith, can never think without a sort of tender and religious awe, a kind of pity full of envy, of these devoted beings, trembling yet confident, these humble but august souls who dare to live upon the very confines of mystery, waiting between the world which is closed and the heaven which is not opened, turned toward the light which they do not see, having only the happiness of thinking that they know where it is, aspiring to the abyss and the unknown, with eyes fixed upon the motionless gloom, kneeling, dismayed, stupefied, shuddering, and half-uplifted at certain times by the deep breathing of Eternity.

BOOK EIGHT

CEMETERIES TAKE WHAT IS GIVEN TO THEM

I

IN WHICH IS TREATED THE MANNER OF ENTERING THE CONVENT

It was into this house that Jean Valjean had, as Fauchelevent said, "fallen from heaven."

He had climbed the garden-wall which formed the angle of the Rue Polonceau. That angels' hymn which he had heard in the middle of the night, was the nuns chanting matins; that hall of which he had caught a glimpse in the darkness, was the chapel; that phantom which he had seen stretched out on the ground, was the sister making reparation; and that bell, which had so strangely surprised him, was the gardener's bell, fastened to Fauchelevent's knee.

So soon as Cosette was in bed, Jean Valjean and Fauchelevent, as we have seen, supped on a glass of wine and a lump of cheese before a good blazing log; then, as the only bed in the cottage was occupied by Cosette, each threw himself on a truss of straw. Before closing his eyes Jean Valjean had said,—"I must stop here henceforth," and this re-

mark kept running through Fauchelevent's head all night.

To tell the truth, neither of them had slept.

Jean Valjean, feeling himself discovered and Javert on his track, understood that he and Cosette were lost if they re-entered Paris. Since the new blast of wind which had struck him had stranded him in this convent, Jean Valjean had but one thought, that of remaining in it. Now, for a wretch in his position, this convent was at once the most dangerous and the safest place; the most dangerous, because, as no man was allowed to enter it, if he were discovered, it would be a flagrant crime, and Jean Valjean would take but one step from the convent to the prison; the safest, because if he succeeded in gaining permission to remain, who would come to seek him there? To live in an impossible spot, that would be safety.

On his side, Fauchelevent racked his brains. He began by declaring to himself that he understood nothing. How was M. Madeleine, in spite of all the surrounding walls, there?—and convent walls cannot be passed at a stride. How was he there with a child? people do not scale a perpendicular wall with a child in their arms. Who was this child? Where did they both come from? Since Fauchelevent had been in the convent he had received no news from Montreuil-sur-Mer and did not

know what had occurred there. Father Madeleine had that look which discourages questioning; and moreover Fauchelevent said to himself,—"One does not question a saint." With him M. Madeleine had preserved all his prestige. Only, from a few words which escaped Jean Valjean, the gardener fancied he could come to the conclusion that M. Madeleine had probably been made bankrupt by the hard times, and was pursued by his creditors; or else he was compromised in a political affair and was in hiding, which idea did not displease Fauchelevent, who, like most of our peasants in the north, had an old Bonapartist feeling. Being in hiding, M. Madeleine had chosen the convent as his asylum, and it was simple that he should wish to remain there. But the inexplicable thing, to which Fauchelevent constantly recurred and which puzzled his brains, was that M. Madeleine was there, and there with this child. Fauchelevent saw them, touched them, spoke to them, and did not believe it. An incomprehensibility had just made its way into Fauchelevent's head. Fauchelevent was groping among conjectures and saw nothing clearly but this,—"M. Madeleine saved my life." This sole certainty was sufficient, and decided him. He said to himself: "It is my turn now." He added in his conscience, "M. Madeleine did not deliberate

long when he had to squeeze himself under the cart to get me out." He decided that he would save M. Madeleine.

He, however, asked himself several questions, to which he gave divers answers. "After what he did for me, if he were a robber, would I save him? just the same. If he were an assassin, would I save him? just the same. Since he is a saint, shall I save him? just the same."

What a problem it was, though, to enable him to remain in the convent! Still, Fauchelevent did not recoil before this almost chimerical attempt; this poor Picardy peasant, who had no other ladder but his devotion, his good will, and a small stock of old rustic craft, this time turned to a generous purpose, undertook to scale the impossibilities of the convent, and the rough escarpments of the rule of Saint Benedict. Fauchelevent was an old man, who had been during all his life selfish, and who, at the end of his days, limping, infirm, and taking no interest in the world, found it pleasant to be grateful, and seeing a virtuous action to be done, flung himself upon it like a man who, at the point of death, finds at hand a glass of good wine which he had never tasted, and eagerly drinks it off. We may add, that the air which he had been breathing for some years past in this convent, had

destroyed his personality, and had eventually rendered some good deed a necessity to him.

He, therefore, formed his resolution: to devote himself to M. Madeleine.

We have just called him a "*poor Picardy peasant.*" The qualification is correct, but incomplete. At the present stage of our story a little physiological examination of Father Fauchelevent becomes useful. He was a peasant, but he had been a notary, which added chicanery to his cunning and penetration to his simplicity. Having, through various reasons, failed in his business, from a notary he had fallen to a carter and day-laborer. But, in spite of the oaths and lashes necessary for horses, as it seems, something of the notary had clung to him. He had some natural wit; he did not say "I are" or "I has;" he could converse, which was a rare thing in a village, and the other peasants used to say of him: "He talks almost like a gentleman with a hat." Fauchelevent in fact belonged to that species which the impertinent and light vocabulary of the last century qualified as: *half townsman, half countryman,* and which the metaphors, falling from the castle to the cottage, label in the classing of the commonality: *a bit of a rustic, a bit of a citizen, pepper and salt.* Fauchelevent, though sorely tried, and hardly used

by Fortune, a sort of poor old threadbare soul, was still a man of first impulses, and spontaneous; a precious quality which prevents a man from ever being wicked. His defects and vices, for he had such, were on the surface; and altogether his physiognomy was one of those which attract the observer. His old face had none of those ugly wrinkles on the top of the forehead which indicate wickedness or stupidity.

At daybreak, after thinking enormously, Father Fauchelevent opened his eyes and saw M. Madeleine who, sitting on his truss of straw, was looking at the sleeping Cosette; Fauchelevent sat up too and said:

"Now that you are here, how will you manage to get in?"

This remark summed up the situation, and aroused Jean Valjean from his reverie.

The two men held counsel.

"In the first place," said Fauchelevent, "you must begin by not setting foot outside this room, neither the little one nor you. One step in the garden, we are done for."

"That is true."

"Monsieur Madeleine," continued Fauchelevent, "you have arrived at a very lucky moment, I ought to say, a very unhappy one, for one of these ladies is dangerously ill. In consequence of this, folk will not look much

this way. It seems that she is dying. They are saying the forty-hour prayer. The whole community is upset. That occupies them. The person who is on the point of going off is a saint. In fact, though, we are all saints here. The only difference between them and me is that they say 'our cell,' and I say 'my cottage.' There will be a service for the dying, and then the service for the dead. For to-day we shall be all quiet here; but I do not answer for to-morrow."

"Still," observed Jean Valjean, "this cottage is in a corner of the walls, it is hidden by a sort of ruin, there are trees, they cannot see it from the convent."

"And I add that the nuns never come near it."

"Well?" asked Jean Valjean.

The point of interrogation that marked this "well" signified, "I fancy that we can remain concealed here." It was to this point of interrogation that Fauchelevent replied:

"There are the little ones."

"What little ones?" asked Jean Valjean.

As Fauchelevent opened his mouth to explain the word he had just uttered, a stroke rang out from a bell.

"The nun is dead," said he. "That is the knell."

And he made Jean Valjean a sign to listen.

A second stroke rang out.

"It is the knell, Monsieur Madeleine. The bell will go on so minute after minute for twenty-four hours, till the body leaves the church. You see they play about. At recreations they need only lose a ball, and, in spite of the prohibition, they will come and look for it here and ransack everything. Those cherubs are little devils."

"Who?" asked Jean Valjean.

"The little ones. You would soon be discovered, I can tell you. They would cry out: 'Why, it's a man!' But there is no danger to-day. There will be no recreation. The day will be spent in prayer. You hear the bell. As I told you, one stroke a minute. It is the knell."

"I understand, Father Fauchelevent, they are boarders."

And Jean Valjean thought to himself:

"It is a chance for educating Cosette."

Fauchelevent exclaimed:

"By Job, they are the little girls for you! And how they would scream at the sight of you, and how they would run. Here, to be a man, is to have the plague, as you see, they have fastened a bell to my leg as if I were a wild beast."

Jean Valjean reflected more and more

deeply. "This convent would save us," he muttered. Then he raised his voice:

"Yes, the difficulty is to remain."

"No," said Fauchelevent, "it is to get out."

Jean Valjean felt the blood rush back to his heart.

"Get out?"

"Yes, Monsieur Madeleine, in order to come in, you must get out."

And, after waiting till the sound of the bell had died away, Fauchelevent continued:

"You must not be found here like that. Where do you come from? for me, you fall from heaven, because I know you; but for the nuns, you must come in by the front door."

Suddenly, they heard the complicated ringing of another bell.

"Ah!" said Fauchelevent, "they are ringing for the vocal mothers. They are going to the chapter. They always hold a chapter when any one dies. She died at daybreak. They generally die at daybreak. But can't you go out by the way you came in? You see, I don't want to ask you a question,—but where did you come in?"

Jean Valjean turned pale; the mere idea of going back to that formidable street made him tremble. Come out of a forest full of tigers, and once out, just imagine a friend advising

you to go in again. Jean Valjean figured to himself the police still swarming in the quarter, agents watching, sentries everywhere, frightful fists stretched out toward his collar, and Javert, perhaps, lurking in a corner of the square.

"Impossible!" said he. "Father Fauchelevent, let it go that I really fell from above."

"Why, I believe it, I believe it," answered Fauchelevent, "you need not tell me so. The good God must have taken you in his hand to have a close look at you and then put you down. Only he meant to put you in a monastery; he made a mistake. Well, there is another peal; it is to tell the porter to go and notify the municipal authorities that they may send and notify the physician of the dead, so that he may come and see that there is a dead woman here. All that is the ceremony of dying. They are not very fond of such visits, these good ladies. A doctor believes in nothing. He raises the veil. He even raises something else, sometimes. What a hurry they have been in to notify the doctor this time! What is up, I wonder? Your little girl is still asleep. What is her name?"

"Cosette."

"Is she your daughter? I mean, are you her grandfather?"

"Yes."

"To get her out will be easy. I have my special door, which opens into the yard; I knock, the porter opens. I have my dorsel on my back, with the little girl in it. I go out. Father Fauchelevent goes out with his dorsel, that is all very simple. You will tell the little one to be very quiet. She will be under the hood. I will leave her for the necessary time with an old friend of mine, a fruiteress in the Rue du Chemin-Vert, who is deaf, and where there is a little bed. I will shout in the fruiteress' ear that it is my niece, and bid her keep her for me till to-morrow. Then the little one will come in with you. For I mean to bring you in again. But how will you manage to get out?"

Jean Valjean shook his head.

"The great point is that no one sees me, Father Fauchelevent. Find means to get me out in the same way as Cosette, in a basket and under cover."

Fauchelevent scratched the tip of his ear with the middle finger of his left hand, which was a sign of serious embarrassment.

A third peal caused a diversion.

"That is the death physician going away," said Fauchelevent. "He has had a look and said: 'She is dead, all right.' When the doctor has countersigned the passport for

Paradise, the undertakers send a coffin. If it is a mother, the mothers put her in it; if a sister, the sisters put her in it. After that I nail it up. That is part of my gardening. A gardener is a bit of a grave-digger. The coffin is placed in a low room of the church which communicates with the street, and which no man but the death physician is allowed to enter, for I don't count the undertakers and myself as men. It is in this room that I nail up the coffin. The undertakers come and take it, and then—Gee-up, driver—that's the way people go to heaven. A box is brought, in which there is nothing, and it is carried off with something in it; and that's what a burial is. *De Profundis.*"

A horizontal sunbeam illumined the face of the sleeping Cosette, who half-opened her lips and looked like an angel drinking-in the light. Jean Valjean was gazing at her again. He no longer heard Fauchelevent.

Not to be heard is no reason why a man should hold his tongue. The worthy old gardener quickly continued his chatter,—

"The grave is dug in the Vaugirard cemetery. They pretend that it is going to be shut up, this Vaugirard cemetery. It is an old cemetery, which is not according to regulations, which has no uniform, and is going to

be retired. It is a pity, for it is convenient. I have a friend there, Father Mestienne, the grave-digger. The nuns of this house possess the privilege of being carried to that cemetery at nightfall. There is an agreement with the Prefecture expressly for them. But what events since yesterday! Mother Crucifixion is dead, and Father Madeleine—"

"Is buried," said Jean Valjean, with a sad smile.

Fauchelevent repeated the word.

"Well, if you were here altogether, it would be a real burial."

A fourth peal rang out. Fauchelevent quickly took down his knee-cap with the bell and buckled it on his knee.

"This time it is for me. The mother prioress wants me. There, I have pricked myself with the tongue of my buckle. Monsieur Madeleine, don't stir, but wait for me. There is something up. If you are hungry, there is bread, wine, and cheese."

And he left the cottage, saying, "Coming, coming."

Jean Valjean watched him hurrying across the garden as rapidly as his crooked leg would allow, while taking a side glance at his melon frames. Less than ten minutes after, Father Fauchelevent, whose bell routed all the nuns as he passed, tapped gently at a door, and a

soft voice answered: "Forever, forever," that is to say, "Come in."

It was the door of the parlor reserved expressly for the gardener. This parlor was adjoining the chapter room. The prioress, seated on the only chair in the room, was waiting for Fauchelevent.

II.

FAUCHELEVENT FACING THE DIFFICULTY

To have an agitated and serious air is peculiar, on critical occasions, to certain characters and professions, and notably to priests and monastics. At the moment when Fauchelevent entered, this double sign of preoccupation was imprinted on the face of the prioress, who was that charming and learned Madamoiselle de Blêmeur, or Mother Innocent, who was usually so cheerful.

The gardener gave a timid bow, and remained in the door-way of the cell. The prioress, who was telling her beads, raised her eyes, and said,—

"Oh, it is you, Father Fauvent?"

This abbreviation had been adopted in the convent.

Fauchelevent again began his bow.

"Father Fauvent, I have summoned you."

"I am here, reverend mother."

"I wish to speak with you."

"And I, on my side," said Fauchelevent,

with a boldness which made him tremble inwardly, "have something to say to the most reverend mother."

The prioress looked at him.

"Ah! you have a communication to make to me?"

"A request."

"Well, speak."

Goodman Fauchelevent, ex-notary, belonged to that class of peasants who possess coolness. A certain skilful ignorance is a strength; people do not suspect it, and you have them. During the two years that he had lived in the convent, Fauchelevent had made a success in the community. Always alone, and attending to his gardening, he had nothing else to do than be curious. Remote as he was from all these veiled women, coming and going, he saw nothing before him but a fluttering of shadows. By constant attention and penetration, he had succeeded in putting flesh on all these phantoms, and these dead were alive to him. He was like a deaf man whose sight is improved, and a blind man whose hearing is sharpened. He had turned his mind to discovering the meaning of the various rings, and had succeeded, so that this enigmatical and taciturn convent had nothing hidden from him; and this sphinx whispered all its secrets in his ear. Fauchelevent, while

knowing everything, concealed everything. That was his art. The whole convent believed him to be stupid. That is a great merit in religion. The vocal mothers set value on Fauchelevent. He was a rare mute. He inspired confidence. Moreover, he was regular, and only went out when absolutely compelled by the claims of his orchard or kitchen garden. This discretion was placed to his credit. But, for all that, he had made two men talk, —in the convent, the porter, and he thus knew all the peculiarities of the parlor; and at the cemetery the grave-digger, and he knew the singularities of the burial; so that he possessed a double light upon these nuns,—the one upon their life, the other upon their death. But he made no abuse of it. The congregation were attached to him. Old, lame, seeing nothing, and probably rather deaf; what qualifications! It would be difficult to fill his place.

The good man, with the assurance of one who feels that he is appreciated, began a rustic address to the reverend prioress, which was rather diffuse and very artful. He talked a good deal about his age, his infirmities, years henceforward, reckoning double for him, the growing demands of his work, nights yet to come, as, for instance, the last, in which he was obliged to draw matting over the melon

frames owing to the moon; and he ended with this, that he had a brother (the prioress gave a start)—a brother who was not young (a second start, but not so alarmed)—that, if leave were granted, this brother would come and live with him and help him; that he was an excellent gardener, and would be of more use to the community than he was; and that, on the other hand, if his brother's services were not accepted, as he, the elder, felt worn out and unequal to his work, he would be compelled, to his great regret, to give up his situation; and that his brother had a little girl whom he would bring with him, and who would be brought up under the eye of God in the house, and might, perhaps, who could tell? become a nun some day.

When he had finished speaking, the prioress broke off her occupation of letting the beads of her rosary slip through her fingers, and said:

"Could you, between this and to-night, procure a strong iron bar?"

"What to do?"

"To use as a lever."

"Yes, reverend mother," replied Fauchelevent.

The prioress, without adding a syllable, rose and walked into the adjoining room, which was the chapter hall. Fauchelevent was left alone.

III.

MOTHER INNOCENT

About a quarter of an hour passed. The prioress came in again and sat down on her chair.

The two speakers appeared preoccupied. We will do the best to record their conversation accurately.

"Father Fauvent?"

"Reverend mother?"

"Do you know the chapel?"

"I have a little box in it where I hear mass and the offices."

"And have you gone into the choir for your work?"

"Two or three times."

"A stone will have to be lifted."

"Heavy?"

"The one at the side of the altar."

"The stone that closes the vault?"

"Yes."

"That is a job where it would be well to have two men."

"Mother Ascension, who is as strong as a man, will help you."

"A woman is never a man."

"We have only a woman to help you. Everybody does the best that they can. Although Dom Mabillon gives four hundred and seventeen epistles of Saint Bernard, and Merlonus Horstius only gives three hundred and sixty-seven, I do not despise Merlonus Horstius."

"Nor I."

"The merit is to work according to your strength. A convent is not a work-yard."

"And a woman is not a man. My brother is a strong fellow!"

"And, then, you will have a crowbar."

"It is the only sort of key that fits such locks."

"There is a ring in the stone."

"I will put the crowbar through it."

"And the stone works on a pivot."

"All right, reverend mother, I will open the vault."

"And the four mothers of the choir will help you."

"And when the vault is open?"

"You must shut it again."

"Is that all?"

"No."

"Give me your orders, most reverend mother."

"Fauvent, we place confidence in you."

"I am here to do everything."

"And to hold your tongue about every thing."

"Yes, reverend mother."

"When the vault is opened—"

"I will shut it again."

"But, first—"

"What, reverend mother?"

"You must let down something into it."

There was a silence, and the prioress, after a quivering of the lower lip, which looked like hesitation, continued:

"Father Fauvent?"

"Reverend mother?"

"You are aware that a mother died this morning."

"No."

"Did you not hear the bell?"

"Nothing can be heard at the end of the garden."

"Really?"

"I can hardly distinguish my own ring."

"She died at daybreak."

"And besides, this morning the wind did not blow in my direction."

"It is Mother Crucifixion, a blessed saint."

The prioress was silent, moved her lips for a moment, as if in mental prayer, and continued:

"Three years ago, through merely seeing Mother Crucifixion pray, a Jansenist, Madame de Béthune, became orthodox."

"Oh, yes, I hear the knell now, reverend mother."

"The mothers have carried her into the dead-room adjoining the church."

"I know."

"No other man than you can, or ought, to enter that room. Keep careful watch. It would be a fine thing to see another man enter the room of the dead."

"More often."

"Eh?"

"More often."

"What do you say?"

"I say more often."

"More often than what?"

"Reverend mother, I did not say more often than what, I said more often."

"I do not understand you; why do you say more often?"

"To say the same as yourself, reverend mother."

"But I did not say more often."

"You did not say it, but I said it to say the same as you."

At this moment nine o'clock struck.

"At nine in the morning and at every hour praise and adoration be to the most

Holy Sacrament of the altar," said the prioress.

"Amen," said Fauchelevent.

The hour struck opportunely. It cut short that "more often." It is probable that, without it, the prioress and Fauchelevent would never have got out of this tangle.

Fauchelevent wiped his forehead. The prioress made another low murmur, probably sacred, then raised her voice:

"In her lifetime Mother Crucifixion made conversions, after her death she will work miracles."

"She will!" said Fauchelevent, correcting his steps, and making an effort not to stumble again.

"Father Fauvent, the community has been blessed in Mother Crucifixion. Of course, it is not granted to every one to die, like Cardinal de Bérulle, while saying the holy mass, and breathe out his soul to God while uttering the words, *Hanc igitur oblationem.* But though she did not attain such happiness, Mother Crucifixion had a very blessed death. She retained her senses up to the last moment. She spoke to us, and then spoke to the angels. She gave us her last commands. If you had a little more faith, and if you could have been in her cell, she would have cured your leg by touching it. She smiled.

We all felt that she was living again in God. There was something of Paradise in that death."

Fauchelevent fancied that it was the end of a prayer.

"Amen," said he.

"Father Fauvent, what the dead wish must be carried out."

The prioress told a few beads. Fauchelevent held his tongue; she continued:

"I have consulted on this point several ecclesiastics, who labor in Our Lord, who turn their attention to the exercise of clerical life, and reap an admirable harvest."

"Reverend mother, the knell is heard better here than in the garden."

"Moreover, she is more than a dead woman, she is a saint."

"Like yourself, reverend mother."

"She slept in her coffin for more than twenty years, by the express permission of our Holy Father Pius VII."

"The same who crowned the emp— Bonaparte."

For a clever man like Fauchelevent the recollection was ill-timed. Luckily the prioress, who was deep in thought, did not hear him. She continued:

"Father Fauvent?"

"Reverend mother?"

"Saint Diodorus, Archbishop of Cappadocia, requested that they should inscribe but one word on his tombstone: *Acarus*, which means an earth-worm; and it was done. Is that true?"

"Yes, reverend mother."

"The blessed Mezzocanes, Abbot of Aquila, wished to be buried under a gallows, and it was done."

"That is true."

"Saint Terentius, Bishop of Oporto, at the mouth of the Tiber on the sea, ordered that they should engrave on his tombstone the symbol which was placed on the graves of parricides, in the hope that passers-by would spit on his tomb. It was done. The dead ought to be obeyed."

"So be it."

"The body of Bernard Guidonis, who was born in France, near Roche-Abeille, was, as he ordered, and in defiance of the King of Castille, conveyed to the church of the Dominicans of Limoges, although Bernard Guidonis was Bishop of Tuy in Spain. Can you say the contrary?"

"Certainly not, reverend mother."

"The fact is attested by Plantavit de la Fosse."

A few beads were told in silence. The prioress resumed:

"Father Fauvent, Mother Crucifixion will be buried in the coffin in which she has slept for twenty years."

"That is but fair."

"It is a continuation of sleep."

"Then I shall have to nail her up in that coffin?"

"Yes."

"And we shall put the undertaker's coffin to one side?"

"Exactly."

"I am at the orders of the most reverend community."

"The four mothers of the choir will help you."

"To nail up the coffin? I do not need them."

"No, to let it down."

"Where?"

"Into the vault."

"What vault?"

"Under the altar."

Fauchelevent started.

"The vault under the altar?"

"Under the altar."

"But—"

"You will have an iron bar."

"Yes, but—"

"You will lift the stone by passing the bar through the ring."

"But—"

"We must obey the dead. To be buried in the vault under the chapel altar, not to be placed in profane soil, and to remain when dead at the place where she had prayed when alive; such was the last wish of Mother Crucifixion. She asked this of us, indeed ordered it."

"But it is forbidden."

"Forbidden by man, ordered by God."

"Suppose it should become known?"

"We have confidence in you."

"Oh! I am like a stone of your wall."

"The chapter is assembled. The vocal mothers whom I have just consulted once again, and who are deliberating, have decided that Mother Crucifixion should be, according to her wish, buried in her coffin, under our altar. Only think, Father Fauvent, if miracles were to take place here! what a glory to God for the community! Miracles come from tombs."

"But, reverend mother, suppose the sanitary commissioner—"

"Saint Benedict II, in a matter of burial, resisted Constantine Pogonatus."

"Still the chief of police—"

"Chonodemairus, one of the seven German kings who entered Gaul during the empire of Constantius, expressly recognized the right of

monks to be buried in religion, that is to say, beneath the altar."

"But the inspector of the prefecture—"

"The world is as nothing in presence of the cross. Martin, eleventh general of the Carthusians, gave this device to his order, *Stat crux dum volvitur orbis.*"

"Amen!" said Fauchelevent, who imperturbably got out of the scrape in that way whenever he heard Latin.

Anybody answers as an audience for a person who has been a long time silent. On the day when Gymnastoras, the rhetorician, left prison, filled with many dilemmas and syllogisms, he stopped before the first tree he came to, harangued it, and made mighty efforts to convince it. The prioress, whose tongue was usually stopped by the dam of silence, and whose reservoir was over-full, rose and exclaimed with the loquacity of an opened sluice:

"I have on my right hand Benedict, and on my left Bernard. Who is Bernard? he is the first Abbot of Clairvaux. Fontaines in Burgundy is a blessed spot for having witnessed his birth. His father's name was Técelin, his mother's Alèthe. He began at Citeaux to end at Clairvaux; he was ordained Abbot by William de Champeaux, Bishop of Chalons-sur-Saône; he had seven hundred

novices, and founded one hundred and sixty monasteries; he overthrew Abailard at the Council of Sens in 1140, and Pierre de Bruys and Henry his disciple, as well as an errant sect called the Apostolicals; he confounded Arnold of Brescia, crushed the Monk Raoul, the Jew-killer, he presided at the Council of Rheims in 1148, caused Gilbert de la Préu, Bishop of Poictiers, to be condemned, and also Eon de l'Etoile, settled the disputes of the princes, enlightened the King, Louis the Young, advised Pope Eugene III, regulated the Temple, preached the Crusade, and performed two hundred and fifty miracles during his life, and as many as thirty-seven in one day. Who is Benedict? he is the Patriarch of Monte Cassino; he is the second founder of the Claustral Holiness, he is the Basil of the West. His order has produced fourteen popes, two hundred cardinals, fifty patriarchs, one thousand six hundred archbishops, four thousand six hundred bishops, four emperors, twelve empresses, forty-six kings, forty-one queens, three thousand six hundred canonized saints, and still exists after one thousand four hundred years. On one side Saint Bernard, on the other the agent of Sanitary Commission! On one side Saint Benedict, on the other the inspector of the Department of Highways! The State, the Department of

Highways, the public undertaker, the rules, the administration, should we recognize these things? Anyone would be indignant who saw the way in which we are treated; we have not even the right to give our dust to Christ! your Sanitary Commission is a revolutionary invention. God subordinate to a commissioner of police, such is the age! Silence, Fauvent!"

Fauchelevent, under this douche, did not feel very comfortable. The prioress continued:

"The right of the monasteries to burial cannot be doubted by anyone. It can only be denied by fanatics and those who have gone astray. We live in times of terrible confusion. People do not know what they should know, and do know what they should not know. Men are gross and impious, and there are people at the present day who cannot distinguish between the most mighty Saint Bernard and that Bernard called: "of the Poor Catholics," a certain worthy ecclesiastic who lived in the thirteenth century. Others are so blasphemous as to compare the scaffold of Louis XVI with the cross of Jesus Christ. Louis XVI was only a king. Let us take heed to God. There are no longer either just or unjust. The name of Voltaire is known and that of Cæsar de Bus unknown. Nevertheless,

Cæsar de Bus is with the blessed, while Voltaire is in torment. The last archbishop, Cardinal de Perigord, did not even know that Charles de Gondren succeeded Bérulles, and François Bourgoin, Gondren, and Jean François Senault, Bourgoin, and Father de Sainte Marthe, Jean François Senault. The name of Father Coton is known, not because he was one of the three who labored for the foundation of the oratory, but because he supplied the Huguenot King Henri IV with material for an oath. That which makes people of the world like Saint Francis de Sales, is that he cheated at play. And, then, religion is attacked. Why? because there have been bad priests, because Sagittarius, Bishop of Gap, was brother of Salonius, Bishop of Embrun, and both were followers of Mammon. Of what consequence is all this? Does it prevent Martin of Tours from being a saint, and having given half of his cloak to a poor man? The saints are persecuted. People close their eyes against the truth. They are accustomed to the darkness. The most ferocious beasts are blind beasts. No one thinks of hell for their good. Oh! the wicked people. 'By order of the king,' means at the present day 'by order of the Revolution.' People no longer know what is due, either to the living or the dead. We are

forbidden to die in holiness. The tomb is a civil office. This is horrible. Saint Leon II wrote two letters expressly,—one to Peter Notarius, the other to the King of the Visigoths, to combat and oppose, in questions that affect the dead, the authority of the exarch and the supremacy of the emperor. Gautier, Bishop of Chalons, opposed Otho, Duke of Burgundy, in this matter. The old magistracy agreed to it. Formerly we had a voice in the chapter itself upon secular affairs. The Abbot of Citeaux, general of the order, was councillor by right of birth in the parliament of Burgundy. We do what we wish with our dead. Is not the body of Saint Benedict himself in France at the abbey of Fleury, called Saint-Benedict-sur-Loire, although he died in Italy, at Monte Cassino, on a Saturday, the twenty-first of the month of March, in the year 543? All this is incontestable. I abhor the Psallants, I hate the priors, I execrate heretics, but I should detest even worse anyone who should uphold the contrary to what I have said. It is only necessary to read Arnoul Wion, Gabriel Bucelin, Trithème, Maurolicus, and Dom Luc d'Achery."

The prioress breathed, and then turned to Fauchelevent. "Father Fauvent, is it settled?"

"It is settled, reverend mother."

"Can we reckon on you?"

"I will obey."

"Very good."

"I am entirely devoted to the convent."

"That is understood. You close the coffin. The sisters will carry it into the chapel. The office for the dead will be said, and then we shall return to the cloister. Between eleven o'clock and midnight you will come with your iron bar. Everything will be performed with the utmost secrecy. There will be no one in the chapel but the four mothers of the choir, Mother Ascension, and yourself."

"And the sister at the post?"

"She will not turn round."

"But she will hear."

"She will not listen. Moreover, what the convent knows, the world is ignorant of."

There was another pause. The prioress continued:

"You will remove your bell. It is unnecessary for the sister at the post to notice that you are there."

"Reverend mother?"

"What is it, Father Fauvent?"

"Has the death physician paid his visit?"

"He will do so at four o'clock to-day. The bell has been rung that gives notice to the death physician. But do you not hear any ringing?"

"I only pay attention to my own summons."

"Very good, Father Fauvent."

"Reverend mother, I shall require a lever at least six feet long."

"Where will you get it?"

"Where there are plenty of gratings there are plenty of iron bars, I have my pile of old iron at the end of the garden."

"About three-quarters of an hour before midnight, do not forget."

"Reverend mother?"

"What is it?"

"If you have other jobs like this, my brother is a strong fellow. A Turk."

"You will do it as quickly as possible."

"I cannot go very quickly. I am infirm; and for that reason require an assistant. I halt."

"Halting is not a crime, and may be a blessing. The Emperor Henry II, who combated the Anti-pope Gregory and re-established Benedict VIII, has two surnames: the Saint and the Lame."

"It is well to have two surtouts," murmured Fauchelevent, who really was rather hard of hearing.

"Father Fauvent, now I think of it, take a whole hour. It will not be too much. Be at the high altar with your crowbar at eleven

o'clock. The service begins at midnight. All must be finished a good quarter of an hour beforehand."

"I will do everything to prove my zeal to the community. This is the understanding. I will nail up the coffin. At eleven o'clock precisely, I will be in the chapel; the mothers of the choir and Mother Ascension will be there. Two men would be better. But no matter! I shall have my crowbar. We will open the vault, let down the coffin, and close the vault. After that, there will not be a trace left. The government will have no suspicion. Reverend mother, is all arranged thus?"

"No."

"What is there, then?"

"There is still the empty coffin."

This brought them to a standstill. Fauchelevent thought of it. The prioress thought of it.

"Father Fauvent, what must be done with the other coffin?"

"It must be put in the ground."

"Empty?"

Another silence. Fauchelevent, with his left hand, made that sort of gesture which dismisses a disagreeable question.

"Reverend mother, I will nail up the coffin in the lower room of the church, no one

can go in there except myself, and I will cover it with the pall."

"Yes, but the bearers, while placing it in the hearse, and lowering it into the grave, will surely perceive that there is nothing in it."

"Oh, the de—!" exclaimed Fauchelevent.

The prioress began to make the sign of the cross, and looked intently at the gardener. The *vil* stuck in his throat. He hastily improvised an expedient to cause the oath to be forgotten.

"Reverend mother, I will put earth in the coffin. That will produce the effect of a body."

"You are right. Earth is the same as a human being. So you will manage with the empty coffin?"

"I take it on myself."

The face of the prioress, which had hitherto been troubled and clouded, now grew serene. She made the sign of a superior dismissing an inferior. Fauchelevent walked toward the door. As he was going out the prioress gently raised her voice:

"Father Fauvent, I am satisfied with you; to-morrow, after the interment, bring me your brother, and tell him to bring me his daughter."

IV.

IN WHICH JEAN VALJEAN HAS QUITE THE AIR OF HAVING READ AUSTIN CASTILLEJO

The strides of halting men are like the glances of the one-eyed, they do not reach their point very rapidly. Furthermore, Fauchelevent was perplexed. He spent nearly a quarter of an hour returning to the cottage in the garden. Cosette was awake. Jean Valjean had seated her by the fireside. At the moment when Fauchelevent entered, Jean Valjean was showing her the gardener's dorsel leaning in a corner, and saying to her:

"Listen to me carefully, my little Cosette. We are obliged to leave this house, but we shall return to it, and be very well off here. The good man will carry you out in that thing upon his back. You will wait for me with a lady. I will come to fetch you. If you do not wish the Thénardier to catch you again, obey and say not a word."

Cosette nodded her head gravely. At the sound Fauchelevent made in opening the door, Jean Valjean turned round.

"Well?"

"All is arranged, and nothing is so," said Fauchelevent. "I have leave to bring you in, but, before bringing you in, we must get you out. That is what stops the cart. As for the little one, that is easy."

"You will carry her out?"

"Will she be quiet?"

"I answer for that."

"But you, Father Madeleine?"

And after an anxious silence Fauchelevent cried:

"Why not go out the same way as you came in?"

Jean Valjean, as on the first occasion, confined himself to saying, "Impossible!"

Fauchelevent, speaking to himself rather than to Jean Valjean, growled:

"There is another thing that troubles me. I said that I would put earth in it, but I think that earth in there, instead of a body, will not seem like it; that will not do, for it will slide and move about. The men will notice it. You understand, Father Madeleine, the government will find it out."

Jean Valjean stared at him, and fancied that he must be raving.

Fauchelevent continued:

"How the dev— are you going to get out? Everything must be settled to-morrow. To-

morrow I must bring you in. The prioress expects you then."

Then he explained to Jean Valjean that it was a reward for a service which he, Fauchelevent, was rendering the community. That it was part of his duty to attend to the funerals, that he nailed up the coffin, and assisted the grave-digger at the cemetery. The nun who had died that morning had requested to be buried in the coffin which had served her as a bed, and to be interred in the vault under the altar of the chapel. That this was forbidden by the police regulations, but she was one of those departed ones to whom nothing could be refused. That the prioress and the vocal mothers intended to carry out the wishes of the deceased. So much the worse for the government. That he, Fauchelevent, would nail up the coffin in the cell, lift the stone in the chapel, and let down the body into the vault. And that, as a reward for this, the prioress would admit into the house his brother as gardener, and his niece as boarder. That his brother was Monsieur Madeleine and that his niece was Cosette. That the prioress had told him to bring his brother the next evening after the pretended funeral at the cemetery. But that he could not bring M. Madeleine in from the outside, if Monsieur Madeleine were not outside. That this was his first difficulty.

And that then he had still another, the empty coffin.

"What do you mean by the empty coffin?" asked Jean Valjean.

Fauchelevent replied:

"Why, the administration coffin."

"What coffin? what administration?"

"A nun dies. The physician of the municipality comes and says: 'There is a nun dead.' Government sends a coffin. The next day it sends a hearse and undertaker's men to fetch the coffin and carry it to the cemetery. They will come and lift the coffin; there will be nothing in it."

"Put something in it."

"A dead body? I have none."

"No."

"What then?"

"A living one."

"Who?"

"Myself," said Jean Valjean.

Fauchelevent, who was seated, sprang up as if a cracker had gone off under his chair.

"You?"

"Why not?"

Jean Valjean had one of those rare smiles which in him resembled a sunbeam in a wintry sky.

"You know, Fauchelevent, that you said: 'Mother Crucifixion is dead,' and I added:

'And Father Madeleine is buried.' It will be so."

"Oh, good, you are laughing, you are not speaking seriously."

"Most seriously. Must I not get out of here?"

"Of course."

"I told you to find for me a dorsel and a cover too."

"Well?"

"The dorsel will be of deal, and the cover of black cloth."

"In the first place, white cloth. Nuns are buried in white."

"All right, then, white cloth."

"You are not like other men, Father Madeleine."

To see such ideas, which are nought but the wild and daring inventions of the hulks, issue from his peaceful surrounding, and mingle with what he called "the little jog-jog of the convent," produced in Fauchelevent a stupor comparable to that of a passer-by who should see a sea-gull fishing in the gutter of the Rue Saint Denis.

Jean Valjean continued:

"The point is to get out of here unseen. This is a way. But first of all tell me. How does it all take place? Where is this coffin?"

"The empty one?"

"Yes."

"Below, in what is called the dead-house. It is upon two trestles, and covered with the pall."

"What is the length of the coffin?"

"Six feet."

"What is this dead-house?"

"A ground-floor room with a grated window looking on the garden, closed on the outside with a shutter, and two doors; one leading to the convent, the other to the church."

"What church?"

"The street church, the one open to everybody."

"Have you the keys of these two doors?"

"No, I have the key of the one communicating with the convent; the porter has the key of the one communicating with the church."

"When does the porter open that door?"

"Only to let the men pass who come to fetch the body. When the coffin has gone out the door is locked again."

"Who nails up the coffin?"

"I do."

"Who places the pall over it?"

"I do."

"Are you alone?"

"No other man, excepting the police doctor, is allowed to enter the dead-room. That is even written on the wall."

"Could you, to-night, when all are asleep in the convent, hide me in that room?"

"No, but I can hide you in a dark closet opening out of the dead-room, in which I put the burial tools, of which I have the care and the key."

"At what hour to-morrow will the hearse come to fetch the coffin?"

"At three in the afternoon. The interment takes place at the Vaugirard cemetery a little before nightfall. It is not very near here."

"I will remain concealed in your tool-closet during the night and morning. How about food? I shall be hungry."

"I will bring you some."

"You can nail me up in the coffin at two o'clock."

Fauchelevent recoiled and cracked his finger-bones.

"But, it is impossible!"

"Nonsense! to take a hammer and drive nails into a board?"

What seemed to Fauchelevent unheard-of was, we repeat, quite simple to Jean Valjean. Jean Valjean had been in worse straits. Any one who has been a prisoner knows how to reduce himself to the diameter of the mode of escape. A prisoner is affected by flight, just as a sick man is by the crisis which cures

or kills him. An escape is a cure. What will not a man undergo for the sake of being cured? To be nailed up and carried in a box like merchandise, to live for a long time in a packing-case, to find air where there is none, to economize one's breath for hours, to know how to choke without dying, was one of Jean Valjean's melancholy talents.

Besides, a coffin in which there is a living body, this convict's expedient, is also an emperor's expedient. If we may believe the monk Austin Castillejo, this was the means which Charles V, wishing, after his abdication, to see La Plombes for the last time, employed to get her into the monastery of Sainte Juste, and to get her out again.

Fauchelevent, when he had slightly recovered, exclaimed:

"But how will you manage to breathe?"

"I will breathe."

"In that box? why, only to think of it chokes me."

"You have a gimlet, you will make a few holes round the mouth here and there, and nail down the lid without closing it tightly."

"Good! and suppose you cough or sneeze?"

"A man who is escaping does not cough or sneeze."

And Jean Valjean added:

"Father Fauchelevent, we must make up

our mind: I must either be captured here or be willing to go out in the hearse."

Everybody must have noticed the fancy which cats have of stopping and loitering in a half-open door. Who has not said to a cat: "Why don't you come in?" There are men who, when an opportunity stands half-opened before them, have also a tendency to remain undecided between two resolutions, at the risk of being crushed by destiny as it hurriedly closes the adventure. The more prudent, cats though they are, and because they are cats, often incur greater danger than the more daring. Fauchelevent was of this hesitating nature. However, Jean Valjean's coolness mastered him in spite of himself. He growled:

"After all, there is no other way."

Jean Valjean continued:

"The only thing I am anxious about is what will take place at the cemetery."

"There is the very thing I am not anxious about," said Fauchelevent. "If you feel sure of getting out of the coffin I feel sure of getting you out of the grave. The grave-digger is a drunkard and a friend of mine. It is Father Mestienne. An old son of the old vine. The grave-digger puts the dead in the grave, and I put the grave-digger in my pocket. I will tell you what will occur. We shall arrive a little before twilight, three-

quarters of an hour before the cemetery gates are closed. The hearse will drive up to the grave. I shall follow, that is my business. I shall have a hammer, a chisel, and pincers in my pocket. The hearse stops, the undertaker knots a cord round your coffin and lets you down. The priest says the prayers, makes the sign of the cross, sprinkles the holy water, and is off. I remain alone with Father Mestienne. He is a friend of mine, I tell you. One of two things is certain; he will either be drunk or he will not be drunk. If he is not drunk, I shall say to him: 'Come and have a dram before the *Bon Coing* closes.' I take him away, I make him fuddled, Father Mestienne does not take long to get fuddled, he has always made a beginning; I lay him under the table, take his card to return to the cemetery, and I come back without him. You will have only to deal with me. If he is drunk I shall say to him: 'Be off, I will do your work for you.' He will go, and I get you out of the hole."

Jean Valjean held out his hand, which Father Fauchelevent seized with a touching peasant devotion.

"It is settled, Father Fauchelevent. All will go well."

"Providing that nothing goes wrong," thought Fauchelevent; "suppose the affair was to have a terrible ending!"

V.

IT DOES NOT SUFFICE TO BE A DRUNKARD TO BE IMMORTAL

The next day, as the sun was setting, the few passers-by on the Boulevard du Maine took off their hats at the passing of an old-fashioned hearse, ornamented with death's head, thigh-bones, and tears. In this hearse was a coffin covered with a white pall, on which lay an enormous black cross, like a tall dead body with hanging arms. A draped carriage, in which could be seen a priest in his surplice, and a choir-boy in his red skull cap, followed. Two mutes in a gray uniform with black facings walked on the right and left of the hearse. Behind them came an old man in workman's garb, who limped. The procession proceeded toward the Vaugirard cemetery.

This cemetery formed an exception to the others in Paris. It had its peculiar usages, just as it had its *porte cochère* and its side gate, which in the quarter, old people, tenacious to old names, called the horseman's gate

and the footman's gate. The Bernardo-Benedictines of the Petit-Picpus had obtained, as we have stated, permission to be buried there, in a separate corner, by night, this ground having formerly belonged to their community. The grave-diggers, having thus an evening duty in summer and a night duty in winter, were subject to special rules. The gates of Parisian cemeteries were closed at that period at sunset, and this being a municipal measure the Vaugirard cemetery was subjected to it like the rest. The horseman's gate and the footman's gate were two contiguous gratings adjoining a pavilion, built by the architect Perronet, in which the porter lived. These gratings, therefore, turned inexorably on their hinges at the moment when the sun disappeared behind the dome of the Invalides. If any grave-digger, at that moment, were detained in the cemetery, he had only one way to get out, his card, supplied to him by the department of funeral ceremonies. A sort of letter-box was arranged in the shutter of the porter's window. The grave-digger threw his card into this box, the porter heard it fall, pulled the string, and the small gate opened. If the grave-digger had not his card he gave his name; the porter, sometimes in bed and asleep, got up, went to identify the grave-digger, and opened the gate with his key;

the grave-digger went out, but paid a fine of fifteen francs.

This cemetery, with its exceptions to the rules, disturbed the symmetry of the administration. It was suppressed shortly after 1830. The cemetery of Mont Parnasse succeeded it, and inherited the famous middle-class cabaret attached to the Vaugirard cemetery, which was surmounted by a little quince painted on a board, one side of which looked out on the drinking tables, the other on the graves, and bearing this legend: *Au Bon Coing.* This Vaugirard cemetery was what might be called a faded cemetery. It was falling into decay. Green mould invaded it, the flowers deserted it. Respectable tradesmen did not care to be buried at Vaugirard; it sounded poor. Père-Lachaise, if you like! to be buried at Père-Lachaise is like having a mahogany suit of furniture. Elegance is understood by that. The Vaugirard cemetery was a venerable enclosure, laid out like an old French garden. Straight walks, box-trees, evergreens, holly-trees, old tombs under old yew-trees, and very tall grass. Night there was terrible. There were some very dismal outlines there.

The sun had not yet set when the hearse with the white pall and black cross entered the avenue of the cemetery Vaugirard, and

the halting man who followed it was no other than Fauchelevent.

The interment of Mother Crucifixion in the vault under the altar, the getting out of Cosette, the introducing of Jean Valjean into the dead-room, had all been effected and without the slightest hitch.

Let us say, in passing, that the burial of Mother Crucifixion beneath the altar is to us a perfectly venial thing. It is one of those faults which resemble a duty. The nuns had accomplished it, not only without feeling troubled, but with the approval of their conscience. In a convent, that which is called "the government" is only an interference with the authorities, an interference which is always questionable. First comes the rule—as for the code we will see about that. Men, make as many laws as you please, but keep them for yourselves. The tribute to Cæsar is never more than the remainder of the tribute to God. A prince is nothing by the side of a principle.

Fauchelevent limped after the hearse, well satisfied. His twin plots, the one with the nuns, the other with Monsieur Madeleine, one for, the other against, the convent, were getting on famously. The calmness of Jean Valjean was one of those powerful tranquilities which are contagious. Fauchelevent no longer

doubted of success. What he still had to do was nothing. During the last two years he had made the grave-digger drunk a dozen times—good Father Mestienne, a chubby-faced fellow. He played with Father Mestienne. He could make him drunk at his will and fancy. He could do what he liked with him. Mestienne's head exactly fitted Fauchelevent's cap. Fauchelevent's security was complete.

At the moment when the procession entered the avenue leading to the cemetery, Fauchelevent, happy, looked at the hearse, and rubbed his huge hands as he said in a low voice:

"Here's a lark!"

All at once the hearse stopped; it had reached the gates. The permission for burying must be shown. The undertaker conversed with the porter of the cemetery. During this colloquy, which always occupied two or three minutes, some one, a stranger, stationed himself behind the hearse by Fauchelevent's side. He was a sort of workman, wearing a vest with wide pockets, and holding a spade under his arm.

Fauchelevent looked at this stranger.

"Who are you?" he asked.

The man replied,

"The grave-digger."

If any man could survive a cannon-ball right

in the middle of his chest, he would cut such a figure as Fauchelevent did.

"The grave-digger."

"Yes."

"You!"

"Me."

"The grave-digger is Father Mestienne."

"Was."

"How, was?"

"He is dead."

Fauchelevent was prepared for anything except this, that a grave-digger could die. Nevertheless, it is true, grave-diggers themselves die. By dint of digging graves for others, they prepare one for themselves.

Fauchelevent stood with widely-opened mouth. He had scarcely strength to stammer:

"Why, it is impossible."

"It is the case."

"But," he went on feebly, "the grave-digger is Father Mestienne."

"After Napoleon, Louis XVIII. After Mestienne, Gribier. Rustic, my name is Gribier."

Fauchelevent, who was very pale, stared at Gribier. He was a tall, thin, livid, thoroughly funereal man. He looked like a broken-down doctor who had turned grave-digger.

Fauchelevent burst into a laugh.

"Ah, what funny things do happen! Father Mestienne is dead. Little Father Mestienne is dead, but long live little Father Lenoir! Do you know what the little Father Lenoir is? It is a little mug of red wine for a six spot, morbigou! real Paris Surêne. And so Father Mestienne is dead. I feel sorry for it, he was a jolly fellow. But you also are a jolly fellow. Isn't that so, comrade? We will drink a glass together, right away?"

The man answered, "I have studied. I have done my four years. I never drink."

The hearse had set out again, and was now going along the main avenue of the cemetery.

Fauchelevent had decreased his pace. He limped more through anxiety than infirmity.

The grave-digger walked in front of him.

Fauchelevent once again surveyed this unknown Gribier.

He was one of those men who, when young, look old, and who, though thin, are very strong.

"Comrade!" cried Fauchelevent.

The man turned round.

"I am the convent grave-digger."

"My colleague," said the man.

Fauchelevent, uneducated, but very sharp, understood that he had to deal with a formidable species, a fine speaker.

He growled:

"So, then, Father Mestienne is dead."

The man answered:

"Completely. The good God consulted his list of bills receivable. Father Mestienne was due. Father Mestienne is dead."

Fauchelevent repeated mechanically:

"The good God . . ."

"The good God," said the man authoritatively, "with philosophers the Eternal Father; with Jacobins the Supreme Being."

"Are we not going to form an acquaintance?" stammered Fauchelevent.

"It is formed. You are a rustic, I am a Parisian."

"People never know one another thoroughly till they have drunk together. A man who empties his glass empties his heart. You will come and drink with me. You won't refuse that."

"Work first."

Fauchelevent thought, "It's all over with me."

There were only a few more turns of the wheel before reaching the nuns' corner.

The grave-digger added:

"Peasant, I have seven children to feed, and as they must eat I must not drink."

And he added with the satisfaction of a serious man who is laying down an axiom:

"Their hunger is the enemy of my thirst."

The hearse turned round a clump of cypress trees, left the main avenue, and turned down a smaller one, entered the grounds, and disappeared in a thicket. This indicated the immediate proximity of the grave. Fauchelevent reduced his pace, but could not reduce that of the hearse. Fortunately, the ground, softened and saturated with the winter rains, stuck to the wheels, and rendered their progress slower.

He drew closer to the grave-digger.

"There is such a capital Argenteuil wine," said Fauchelevent.

"Villager," replied the man, "I was not meant to be a grave-digger. My father was porter at the Prytanæum. He destined me for literature. But he was unfortunate. He met with losses at the Bourse. Hence I was compelled to relinquish the profession of letters. However, I am still a public scribe."

"Then you are not a grave-digger?" retorted Fauchelevent, catching to this branch, weak though it was.

"One does not prevent the other. I accumulate."

Fauchelevent did not understand the last word.

"Let us go to drink," said he.

Here a remark is necessary. Fauchelevent, however great his agony might be, proposed

drinking, but did not explain himself on one point; who was to pay? As a general rule, Fauchelevent proposed and Father Mestienne paid. A proposal to drink evidently resulted from the new situation created by the new grave-digger, and that proposal the gardener must make, but the old gardener left, not undesignedly, the proverbial quarter of an hour, called Rabelais', in obscurity. However affected Fauchelevent might be, he did not feel anxious to pay.

The grave-digger continued with a smile of superiority:

"We must eat. I accepted the succession to Father Mestienne. When a man has nearly completed his course of studies, he is a philosopher. To the work of my hand I have added the work of my arms. I have my writer's stall at the market in the Rue de Sèvres. You know? the umbrella market? All the cooks of the Croix Rouge apply to me, and I compose their declarations to their true loves. In the morning I write billets-doux, in the evening I dig graves. Such is life, rustic."

The hearse went on. Fauchelevent, with the greatest anxiety, looked all about him. Heavy drops of perspiration fell from his forehead.

"Still," the grave-digger continued, "a man cannot serve two mistresses. I must

choose between the pick and the pen. The pick ruins my hand."

The hearse stopped.

The choir-boy got out of the mourning coach, then the priest. One of the small front wheels of the hearse was slightly raised by a heap of earth, beyond which an open grave was visible.

"Here's another lark!" said Fauchelevent in consternation.

VI.

BETWEEN FOUR PLANKS

Who was in the coffin? We know. Jean Valjean.

Jean Valjean had contrived to be able to live in it, and to almost breathe.

It is a strange thing to what an extent ease of conscience produces ease in other respects. The whole combination premeditated by Jean Valjean had been going on, and going on excellently, since the previous evening. He calculated, like Fauchelevent, upon Father Mestienne. He had no doubt of the result. Never was a situation more critical nor a calamity more perfect.

The four planks of the coffin exhaled a kind of terrible peace. It seemed as if somewhat of the repose of the dead were blended with Jean Valjean's tranquility.

From the bottom of this coffin he had been able to follow and did follow all the phases of the formidable drama which he was playing with Death.

G. Jeanniot inv.
Cl. Faivre

The Service Over the Grave.—Cosette, Vol. II., 253.

A short while after Fauchelevent had finished nailing down the coffin lid, Jean Valjean felt himself carried and then wheeled along. Through the cessation of the jolting he felt that they had passed from the pavement to the hard earth, that is to say, they had left the streets, and turned into the boulevards. From the hollow sound he guessed that he was crossing the bridge of Austerlitz. At the first halt, he understood that he was entering the cemetery; at the second halt, he said to himself: "Here is the grave."

Suddenly he felt hands seize the coffin, and then noticed a rumbling grating on the planks; he guessed that a rope was being fastened round the coffin in order to let it down into the grave.

Then he felt dizzy.

Probably the undertakers and the gravedigger had made the coffin oscillate and let the head down before the feet. He recovered completely when he found himself horizontal and motionless. He had touched the bottom. He felt a certain amount of cold. A chill and solemn voice arose above him. He heard pass away, so slowly that he could distinguish each in turn, the Latin words, which he did not understand:

Qui dormiunt in terræ pulvere, evigilabunt; alii in vitam æternam, et alii in opprobrium, ut videant semper.

A boyish voice said:

De profundis.

The grave voice began again:

Requiem æternam donna ei, Domine.

The boyish voice replied:

Et lux perpetua luceat ei.

He heard on the board above him, something like the gentle plash of rain. It was probably the holy water.

He thought, "That will soon be finished. I only need a little patience. The priest will go away. Fauchelevent will take Mestienne off to drink. I shall be left here. Afterwards Fauchelevent will return alone, and I shall get out. It will take about an hour."

The grave voice continued:

Requiescat in pace.

And the boyish voice said:

Amen.

Jean Valjean, who was listening attentively, heard something like the sound of retreating footsteps.

"They are going away," thought he. "I am alone."

All at once he heard over his head a noise which appeared to him like a thunderclap.

It was a spadeful of earth falling on the coffin.

A second spadeful fell.

One of the holes by which he breathed was stopped up.

A third shovelful of earth fell.

Then a fourth.

There are some things stronger than the strongest man.

Jean Valjean lost consciousness.

VII.

IN WHICH WILL BE FOUND THE ORIGIN OF THE SAYING: DO NOT LOSE YOUR CARD

This is what took place above the coffin which contained Jean Valjean.

When the hearse had gone away, when the priest and the choir-boy had got into the coach and were gone, Fauchelevent, who did not once take his eyes off the grave-digger, saw him stoop down and seize the spade, which was standing upright in the heap of earth.

At this moment, Fauchelevent formed a supreme resolution.

He placed himself between the grave and the digger, folded his arms, and said:

"I'll pay."

The grave-digger looked at him in amazement, and replied:

"What, peasant?"

Fauchelevent repeated,

"I'll pay."

"What?"

"For the wine."

"What wine?"

"The Argenteuil."

"Where is the Argenteuil?"

"At the 'Bon Coing!'"

"Go to the devil," said the grave-digger.

And he threw a spadeful of earth on the coffin.

The coffin gave forth a hollow sound. Fauchelevent felt himself totter, and was himself ready to fall into the grave. He cried, in a voice with which a death-rattle was beginning to be mingled:

"Comrade, before the 'Bon Coing' closes!"

The grave-digger filled his spade again. Fauchelevent continued: "I'll pay."

And he seized the grave-digger's arm.

"Listen to me, comrade. I am the convent grave-digger, and have come to help you. It is a job which can be done by night. Let us begin by having a drink."

And as he spoke, even while clinging to this desperate invitation, he made the melancholy reflection: "And suppose he does drink! will he get drunk?"

"Provincial," said the grave-digger, "since you are so pressing, I consent. We will drink. After work, never before."

And he raised his spade, but Fauchelevent stopped him.

"It is Argenteuil wine, at six sous."

"Why," said the grave-digger, "you must be a bell-ringer. Ding dong, ding dong; that's all you can say. Go about your business."

And he threw the second shovelful.

Fauchelevent had reached that moment when a man is no longer aware of what he says.

"But come and drink," cried he, "since I offer to pay."

"When we have put the child to bed," said the grave-digger.

He threw the third spadeful.

Then he dug the shovel into the ground and added:

"You see, it will be very cold to-night! and the dead woman would call after us if we were to leave her here without a blanket."

At this moment, in filling his spade, the grave-digger stooped, and his jacket pocket gaped.

Fauchelevent's wandering glance fell mechanically into his pocket and remained there.

The sun was not yet hidden by the horizon, and there was still sufficient light to distinguish something white at the bottom of this gaping pocket.

All the brightness of which a Picardy peasant's eye is capable flashed in the pupils of

Fauchelevent. An idea had just struck him. Unnoticed by the grave-digger, who was occupied with a spadeful of earth, he thrust his hand into his pocket from behind, and drew out of that pocket the white thing at the bottom.

The grave-digger threw the fourth shovelful into the grave.

At the moment when he turned to get the fifth, Fauchelevent looked at him with profound calmness, and said:

"By the way, my novice, have you your card?"

"What card?"

"The sun is just going to set."

"Very good, let him put on his night-cap."

"The cemetery gates will be shut."

"Well, and what then?"

"Have you your card?"

"Ah, my card!" said the grave-digger. He felt in his pocket. Having rummaged in one pocket he tried another. He passed to his fobs, ransacked one, turned the other inside out.

"No," he said, "I have not got my card. I must have forgotten it."

"Fifteen francs fine," said Fauchelevent.

The grave-digger turned green. Green is the pallor of livid men.

"Oh, Jesus, my bandy-legged God, down with the moon!" exclaimed he. "Fifteen francs fine!"

"Three one hundred-sous pieces," said Fauchelevent.

The grave-digger let fall his shovel. Fauchelevent's turn had come.

"Come, conscript," said Fauchelevent, "never despair. There is no need to commit suicide, and take advantage of the grave. Fifteen francs are fifteen francs, and besides, you can avoid paying them. I am an old hand, and you a new one. I am up to all the tricks, dodges, turns and twists. I will give you a piece of friendly advice. One thing is clear, the sun is setting, it is touching the dome, and the cemetery will shut in five minutes."

"That is true," replied the grave-digger.

"Five minutes will not be enough for you to fill up this grave, it is deep as the devil, this grave, and finish in time to get out before they close the gates."

"You're right."

"In that case, fifteen francs fine."

"Fifteen francs!"

"But you have time,—where do you live?"

"Two steps from the barrier. A quarter of an hour's walk from here. No. 87, Rue de Vaugirard."

"You have just time enough if you hang your things round your neck to get out."

"So I have."

"Once outside the gates, you will run home, fetch your card, return, the porter will open the gate for you. Having your card, there will be nothing to pay, and you will bury your dead. I will stop her from running away during your absence."

"I owe you my life, peasant."

"Be off at once," said Fauchelevent.

The grave-digger, beside himself with gratitude, shook his hand, and ran off.

When the grave-digger had disappeared behind the bushes, Fauchelevent listened till his footsteps died away, then bent over the grave, and said in a low voice:

"Father Madeleine!"

There was no reply.

Fauchelevent trembled. He tumbled rather than jumped into the grave, threw himself on the coffin, and cried:

"Are you there?"

There was silence in the coffin.

Fauchelevent, who could not breathe for trembling, took out his cold chisel and hammer and pried off the coffin lid. The face of Jean Valjean appeared in the gloom, pale, and with closed eyes.

The gardener's hair stood on end; he got

up, then leaned against the side of the grave, and almost fell on the coffin. He gazed at Jean Valjean. Jean Valjean lay there pale and motionless.

Fauchelevent murmured in a voice faint as a breath:

"He is dead!"

And drawing himself up, he folded his arms so violently that his clenched fists struck his shoulders, he cried:

"That is the way I save him!"

Then the poor old man began sobbing. Soliloquizing, for it is a mistake to suppose that there is no soliloquy in nature. Powerful agitations often talk aloud.

"It is Father Mestienne's fault. Why did he die, the old fool? Had he any need to go off so unexpectedly? It is he who has killed Monsieur Madeleine. Father Madeleine! He is in his coffin. It is all over with him. It is ended. Has such a thing as this any sense in it? Oh, my God, he is dead! Well, and the little girl, what shall I do with her? What will the fruiteress say? Is it possible that God would allow such a man to die in such a way? When I think how he got under my cart! Father Madeleine! Father Madeleine! By Heaven, he is suffocated, as I said he would be. He would not believe me. Well! this is a pretty trick to play. The worthy man is

dead, the best man among all the good God's good people! And his little one! Well! I shan't go back. I will stay here. To have done such a thing as this! It is not worth while being two old men in order to be two such old fools. But how did he manage to get into the convent? that was the beginning. A man ought not to do things like that. Father Madeleine, Father Madeleine, Father Madeleine, Madeleine; Monsieur Madeleine, Monsieur le Maire! He does not hear me. Get out of there at once!"

And he tore his hair.

A shrill grating sound was audible at a distance through the trees. It was the closing of the cemetery gate. Fauchelevent bent over Jean Valjean, and suddenly bounding back felt all the horror one has of the grave. Jean Valjean had opened his eyes and was staring at him.

Seeing a death is fearful, seeing a resurrection is nearly as fearful. Fauchelevent became like stone, pale, haggard, overcome by such excessive emotion, not knowing if he had to do with a dead man or a living man, looking at Jean Valjean, who looked at him.

"I was falling asleep," said Jean Valjean.

And he sat up.

Fauchelevent fell on his knees.

"Holy Virgin! how you frightened me!"

Then he rose and cried:

"Thank you, Father Madeleine!"

Jean Valjean had only fainted. The fresh air had revived him. Joy is the reflux of terror. Fauchelevent had almost as much difficulty in recovering himself as Jean Valjean had.

"Then you are not dead! Oh! what a clever fellow you are! I called to you so repeatedly that you came back. When I saw your closed eyes, I said: 'There, he is suffocated!' I should have gone stark mad, fit for a strait-jacket. They would have put me in Bicêtre. What would you have me do if you were dead? and your little one! The fruiteress would not have understood it at all. A child is left on her hands, and the grandfather is dead! What a story! oh, my good saints in Paradise, what a story! Well, you are alive, that's the great thing."

"I am cold," said Jean Valjean.

This remark completely recalled Fauchelevent to the reality, which was urgent. These two men, who had scarce recovered, had, they knew not why, a strange feeling, a troubled mind, which emanated from the gloomy place.

"Let us get out of this at once," said Fauchelevent.

He felt in his pocket and produced a flask, with which he had provided himself.

"But first take a swallow," said he.

The flask completed what the fresh air had begun. Jean Valjean drank a mouthful of brandy and regained perfect possession of himself.

He got out of the coffin, and helped Fauchelevent to nail on the lid. Three minutes later they were out of the grave.

Fauchelevent was calm. He took his time. The cemetery was closed. There was no fear of Gribier returning. That "conscript" was at home, busily seeking his card, and prevented from finding it there, because it was in Fauchelevent's pocket. Without his card he could not return to the cemetery.

Fauchelevent took the spade, and Jean Valjean the pick, and they together buried the empty coffin.

When the grave was filled, Fauchelevent said to Jean Valjean:

"Come along. I will carry the spade. You carry the pick."

Night fell.

Jean Valjean felt some difficulty in moving and walking. In the coffin he had grown stiff, and had become to some extent a corpse. The rigidity of death had seized upon him between these four planks. He must, so to speak, become thawed.

"You are stiff," said Fauchelevent, "it is

a pity that I am a cripple, or we would have a run."

"Nonsense," said Jean Valjean, "half a dozen strides will make my legs all right again."

They went along the avenues by which the hearse had passed. On reaching the closed gate, and the porter's lodge, Fauchelevent, who held in his hand the grave-digger's card, threw it into the box, the porter pulled the string, the gate opened, they went out.

"How well it has all gone!" said Fauchelevent; "it was an excellent idea you had, Father Madeleine!"

They passed through the Vaugirard barrier in the simplest way in the world. In the vicinity of a cemetery, a spade and a pick are two passports.

The Rue de Vaugirard was deserted.

"Father Madeleine," said Fauchelevent, raising his eyes to the houses as they walked along, "you have better eyes than I have. Show me No. 87."

"Here it is," said Jean Valjean.

"There is no one in the street," continued Fauchelevent, "give me the pick, and wait for me a couple of minutes."

Fauchelevent entered No. 87, went right to the top, guided by that instinct which ever leads the poor man to the top story, and

rapped in the darkness at the door of a garret. A voice replied:

"Come in."

It was Gribier's voice.

Fauchelevent pushed open the door. The grave-digger's room was like all these wretched abodes, an impoverished and crowded garret. A packing case—possibly a coffin—occupied the place of a chest of drawers, a butter-jar was the water-cistern, a straw mattress represented the bed, while the floor filled the place of chairs and table. In one corner, on an old ragged piece of carpet, were a thin woman and a lot of children all in a heap. The whole of this poor interior showed signs of a row, one would have said that there had been an earthquake "for one" there. The blankets were torn away, the rags were scattered about, the jug was broken, the mother had been crying, and the children had probably been beaten;—there were evident signs of an obstinate and savage search. It was plain that the grave-digger had been wildly looking for his card, and made everything in the garret responsible for its loss, from his jug to his wife. He looked desperate.

But Fauchelevent was too eager for the end of the adventure to notice this sad side of his success. He went in, and said: "I have brought you your pick and spade."

Gribier looked at him in stupefaction.

"Is it you, peasant?"

"And to-morrow morning you will find your card with the porter of the cemetery."

And he placed the shovel and pick on the ground.

"What does this mean?" asked Gribier.

"It means that you let your card fall out of your pocket, that I found it on the ground when you had left, that I have buried the dead, that I have filled up the grave, that I have done your work, that the porter will give you your card, and that you will not pay fifteen francs. That's what it is, conscript!"

"Thanks, villager," said Gribier, quite dazzled, "next time I will pay for the drinks."

VIII.

A SUCCESSFUL EXAMINATION

An hour later, in the darkness of night, two men and a child presented themselves at number sixty-two, Petite Rue Picpus. The elder of the two men raised the knocker and rapped.

It was Fauchelevent, Jean Valjean and Cosette.

The two men had fetched Cosette from the fruiteress' in the Rue Chemin-Vert, where Fauchelevent had left her on the previous evening. Cosette had spent the four-and-twenty hours, understanding nothing, and silently trembling. She had trembled so much that she had not cried. She had eaten nothing, nor had she slept. The worthy fruiteress had asked her a hundred questions, but had only obtained as answer a gloomy look, ever the same. Cosette did not breathe a syllable of what she had seen or heard during the last two days. She guessed that she was passing through a crisis. She felt deeply that she must "be good." Who has not experienced the sovereign power

of the two words, uttered with a certain accent in the ear of a little startled being: "Say nothing!" Fear is dumb. Besides, no one can keep a secret like a child.

Only when, after these mournful four-and-twenty hours, she saw Jean Valjean again, she uttered such a cry of joy that any thoughtful person who had heard it would have divined in this cry an escape from an abyss.

Fauchelevent belonged to the convent, and knew all the pass-words. All doors opened to him. Thus was solved the double and fearful problem, "to get out and to get in."

The porter, who had his instructions, opened the little gate which communicated between the court-yard and the garden, in the wall of the former facing the gate-way, which might still be seen from the street twenty years ago. The porter showed them all three through this gate, and thence they reached the inner private parlor where Fauchelevent had received the orders of the prioress on the previous day.

The prioress, rosary in hand, was waiting for them, and a mother of the choir, with her veil down, was standing near her. A modest candle lit up, or, to speak more correctly, pretended to light up, the parlor.

The prioress took a thorough look at Jean Valjean. Nothing examines so carefully as a downcast eye.

Then she questioned him:

"You are the brother?"

"Yes, reverend mother," answered Fauchelevent.

"What is your name?"

Fauchelevent answered:

"Ultime Fauchelevent."

He had really had a brother called Ultime, who was dead.

"Where do you come from?"

Fauchelevent replied:

"From Picquigny, near Amiens."

"What is your age?"

Fauchelevent replied:

"Fifty."

"What is your trade?"

Fauchelevent replied:

"Gardener."

"Are you a good Christian?"

Fauchelevent replied:

"All the members of our family are so."

"Is this little girl yours?"

Fauchelevent replied:

"Yes, reverend mother."

"You are her father?"

Fauchelevent replied:

"Her grandfather."

The vocal mother said to the prioress in a whisper:

"He answers well."

Jean Valjean had not said a word.

The prioress looked attentively at Cosette, and whispered to the vocal mother:

"She will be ugly."

The two mothers consulted for a few minutes in a very low voice in a corner of the parlor, and then the prioress turned and said:

"Father Fauvent, you will get another knee-cap and bell. We shall require two in future."

On the morrow two bells were really heard in the garden, and the nuns could not resist the temptation to raise a corner of their veils. They could see under the shade of the trees two men digging side by side, Fauvent and another. Wonderful event. Silence was so far broken that they whispered: "It is an assistant gardener."

The mothers of the choir added: "It is a brother of Father Fauvent."

Jean Valjean was in fact regularly installed; he had the leathern knee-cap, and the bell, and was therefore official. He called himself Ultime Fauchelevent.

The most powerful determining clause of his admission was the remark of the prioress with reference to Cosette: *She will be ugly.*

The prioress, once she had prognosticated this, felt an affection for Cosette, and gave her a place in the boarding-school as a charity pupil.

This is very logical. It is all in vain to have no looking-glasses in a convent, women are conscious of their appearance; now, girls who feel themselves pretty have a disinclination to take the veil; as profession is generally in an inverse ratio to the beauty more is hoped from ugly than from pretty girls. Hence a marked preference for the ugly.

All this adventure elated good old Fauchelevent very much; he had a triple success,—with Jean Valjean, whom he saved and sheltered; with the grave-digger, Gribier, who said to himself: "he saved me a fine;" and with the convent, which, thanks to him, while keeping the coffin of Mother Crucifixion under the altar, eluded Cæsar and sanctified God. There was a coffin with a body at the Petit-Picpus, and a coffin without a body in the Vaugirard cemetery; public order was doubtless greatly disturbed by this, but no one noticed it. As for the convent, its gratitude to Fauchelevent was great. He became the best of servants, and most precious of gardeners. On the very next visit of the Archbishop, the prioress told the whole affair to his Grace, partly in confession and partly in a boast. The Archbishop, on leaving the convent, spoke about it, applaudingly and in a whisper, to Monsieur de Latil, confessor to Monseigneur, and afterwards Archbishop of

Rheims and Cardinal. The admiration felt for Fauchelevent traveled far, for it went to Rome. We have seen a letter addressed by the then reigning pope, Leo XII, to one of his relatives, Monsignore, in the Nunciature at Paris, and called, like himself, Della Genga; in which were the following lines,—"It appears that there is at a convent in Paris an excellent gardener, who is a holy man, of the name of Fauvent." Nothing of all this triumph reached Fauchelevent in his hut; he went on grafting, weeding, and covering his melon beds, quite unaware of his excellence and sanctity. He no more suspected his glory than does a Durham or Surrey steer whose portrait is published in the *Illustrated London News*, with the inscription, "The ox that gained the short-horn prize."

IX.

THE CLOSE

Cosette in the convent continued to be silent. She naturally thought herself Jean Valjean's daughter. However, as she knew nothing, she could say nothing, and in any case would have said nothing. As we have remarked, nothing trains children to silence like misfortune. Cosette had suffered so greatly that she feared everything even to speak, even to breathe. A word had so often brought down an avalanche upon her! She had scarce begun to grow reassured since she had belonged to Jean Valjean. She grew very soon accustomed to the convent. The only thing she regretted was Catherine, but she did not dare say so. One day, however, she remarked to Jean Valjean: "Father, if I had known, I would have brought her with me."

Cosette, on becoming a boarder at the convent, was obliged to assume the garb of the pupils of the house. Jean Valjean obtained the clothes she took off. These were the same mourning clothes he made her put on when he took her away from the Thénardiers' inn.

They were not much worn. Jean Valjean placed these clothes and her woolen stockings and shoes, with a quantity of camphor and other odorous drugs with which convents abound, in a small valise which he managed to procure. He placed this valise on a chair by his bedside, and always had the key about him. "Father," Cosette asked him one day, "what is that box which smells so nice?"

Father Fauchelevent, in addition to the glory we have described and of which he was ignorant, was rewarded for his good deed; in the first place, he was happy; and, in the second place, he had much less to do, owing to the division of labor. Lastly, as he was very fond of snuff, he had from M. Madeleine's presence the advantage that he took thrice as much as before, and in a manner infinitely more voluptuous, because M. Madeleine paid for it.

The nuns did not adopt the name of Ultime; they called Jean Valjean "*the other Fauvent.*"

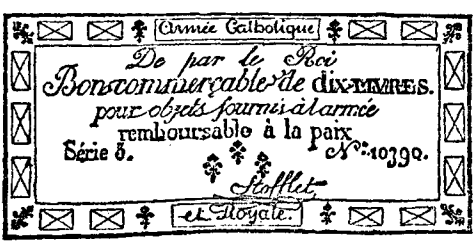
Had these holy women had aught of the discrimination of Javert, they would have noticed that when anything had to be procured from outside for the garden, it was always the elder Fauvent, the old, the infirm, the cripple, who went out, and never the other; but either because eyes constantly fixed on God know not how to spy, or because they were, by preference, occupied in watching one another, they

noticed nothing. However, Jean Valjean did quite right in keeping quiet and not stirring out. Javert watched the quarter for a whole month.

This convent was to Jean Valjean like an island surrounded by gulfs. These four walls were henceforth the world for him. He saw enough of the sky there to be calm, and enough of Cosette to be happy.

A very pleasant life commenced for him.

He lived with old Fauchelevent in the cottage at the end of the garden. This little bit of a house, built of lath and plaster, which still existed in 1825, was composed, as we have said, of three rooms which had only the bare walls. The largest room was surrendered by force, for Jean Valjean had resisted in vain, by Father Fauchelevent to M. Madeleine. The wall of this room had for ornament, in addition to the two nails for hanging up the knee-cap and the basket, a Royalist note for ten livres, dated '93, fastened to the wall above the mantel-piece, and of which we give below an exact fac-simile.



This Vendean assignat had been nailed to the wall by the previous gardener, an ex-chouan, who died in the convent, and to whom Fauchelevent had succeeded.

Jean Valjean worked daily in the garden, and was very useful. As he had once been a pruner he found it quite easy to become a gardener. It will be remembered that he had a great number of receipts and secrets of farming. These he turned to account. Nearly all the trees in the orchard were wild stock; he grafted them, and made them produce excellent fruit.

Cosette had permission to spend an hour daily with him. As the sisters were sad and he was kind, the child compared them and adored him. At the fixed hour she ran to the cottage. When she entered the old place she filled it with Paradise. Jean Valjean grew brighter, and felt his own happiness grow with the happiness which he gave Cosette. The joy which we inspire has this charming peculiarity, that far from being weakened, like ordinary reflections, it returns to us more radiant than before. In her hours of recreation Jean Valjean watched her from a distance, playing and running, and distinguished her laugh from that of the others.

For Cosette now laughed.

The appearance of Cosette had also changed

to a certain extent. The sad look had passed away. Laughter is the sun which drives winter from the human face.

When the recreation time was ended and Cosette returned, Jean Valjean watched the windows of her school-room, and at night would rise to gaze at the windows of her dormitory.

God has His inscrutable designs; the convent contributed, like Cosette, to maintain and complete in Jean Valjean the work of the bishop. It is certain that one of the sides of virtue leads to pride. There is a bridge built there by the evil one. Jean Valjean was perhaps unconsciously very near this side and this bridge, when Providence threw him into the convent of the Petit-Picpus. So long as he had only compared himself with the bishop, he had found himself unworthy, and had been humble, but for some time past he had been beginning to compare himself with men, and pride was growing up. Who knows? He might perhaps have ended by gradually returning to hatred?

The convent checked him on this descent.

It was the second place of captivity which he had seen. In his youth, in what had been to him the commencement of life, and again, very recently, he had seen another, a frightful spot, a terrible spot, and whose severities had

ever appeared to him to be the iniquity of justice and the crime of the law. At the present day after the hulks he saw the convent, and reflecting that he had been a member of the galleys and was now, so to speak, a spectator of the convent, he anxiously confronted them in his thoughts.

At times he leaned on his spade, and slowly fell into the endless spirals of profound reverie.

He recalled his old comrades; how wretched they were; they rose at dawn and worked till night; they were scarce granted time to sleep; they lay down on camp beds and were only allowed mattresses two inches thick; in cells which were only warmed in the severest months of the year; they were dressed in hideous red jackets; they were allowed, as an indulgence, canvas trousers in the great heat, and a woolen bandage on their back in the severe cold; they only ate meat and drank wine when they worked on "fatigue parties." They lived, without names, designated solely by numbers, and being, as it were, naught but ciphers, lowering their eyes, lowering their voice, with shorn hair, under the stick, and in shame.

Then his thoughts turned to the beings whom he had before him.

These beings also lived with hair cropped,

eyes downcast, and a low voice, not in shame, but amid the mockery of the world, their backs not bruised by a stick, but their shoulders lacerated by the discipline. Their names, too, had vanished among human beings; and they now existed only under severe appellations. They never ate meat nor drank wine; they often remained till night without food; they were dressed, not in a red jacket, but in a black shroud of wool, heavy in summer and light in winter, and were unable to reduce it or add to it at all, without even having, whatever the season, the privilege of changing to a linen gown or a woolen cloak, and they wore for six months in the year serge chemises, which caused them a fever. They slept not in cells warmed merely in the severe cold, but in cells in which fires were never kindled; they slept, not on mattresses two inches thick, but on straw. Lastly, they were not even allowed to sleep; every night, after a day of labor, they were compelled, when sinking beneath the weight of the first rest, as they were falling asleep and just beginning to be warm, to awake, to get up, and go and pray in a dark and freezing chapel, with their knees upon the stones.

On certain days, moreover, each of these beings was obliged, in turn, to remain for twelve hours kneeling on the flag-stones pros-

trate on the ground, with her arms extended in the form of a cross.

The others were men; these were women.

What had these men done? they had robbed, violated, plundered, killed, assassinated. They were bandits, forgers, poisoners, incendiaries, murderers, and parricides. What had these women done? They had done nothing.

On one side, brigandage, fraud, robbery, violence, lubricity, homicide, every sort of sacrilege, every variety of crime; on the other, only one thing, innocence.

Perfect innocence, almost borne away in a mysterious assumption, still clinging to the earth by virtue, and already joined to Heaven by holiness.

On one side, confessions of crimes made in a whisper. On the other, confessions of faults made aloud. And what crimes! and what faults!

On one side miasmas, on the other an ineffable perfume. On one side a moral pestilence, closely guarded, kept in subjection by cannon, and slowly devouring its plague-stricken sufferers; on the other, a chaste kindling of all the souls on the same hearth. There the darkness, here the shadow, but a shadow full of light, and light full of radiance.

They were two places of slavery; but in the first there was a possible deliverance, a con-

stantly visible legal limit, and, besides, escape. In the second, perpetuity; the only hope on the farthest distant boundary of the future, being that gleam of liberty which men call death. In the former people were only held by chains, in the latter they were chained by their faith.

What emerged from the first? An immense curse, a gnashing of teeth, hatred, desperate wickedness, a cry of rage against human society, and sarcasms hurled at Heaven. What issued from the second? blessing and love.

And in these two places, so similar, and yet so contrasted, these two so different species of beings accomplished the same work, expiation.

Jean Valjean perfectly understood the expiation of the first; personal expiation, expiation for oneself. But he did not understand the expiation of these others, that of these creatures without reproach or stain, and he asked himself with trembling: Expiation of what? What expiation?

A voice answered in his conscience; the most divine act of human generosity, expiation for others.

Here we lay aside any and every personal theory, we are only the narrator, it is in Jean Valjean's place that we put ourselves, and we reproduce his impressions.

He had before his eyes the sublime summit of abnegation, the highest pinnacle of possi-

ble virtue; that innocence which forgives men their faults, and, in their place, makes expiation of them; servitude endured, torture accepted, punishment demanded by souls which have not sinned, that they may exempt from it souls which have erred; the love of humanity swallowed up in the love of God, but remaining in it, distinct and suppliant; gentle, feeble beings who have the wretchedness of those who are punished and the smile of those who are rewarded.

And he remembered that he had dared to complain!

Often, in the middle of the night, he rose to listen to the grateful song of these innocent creatures, weighed down by severity, and his blood ran cold when he thought that men, who were justly chastised, raised their voices to Heaven only to blaspheme, and that he, wretch as he was, had lifted his hand in threat toward God.

It was a striking thing, and one which made him reflect deeply, as though a whisper from Providence itself, that all the things he had done to escape from the other place of expiation, such as scaling walls, climbing into enclosures, risks accepted with the chance of death, the hard and difficult ascent, he had gone through again, in entering the present place. Was it a symbol of his destiny?

This house was also a prison, and bore a mournful likeness to the other abode from which he had fled, and yet he had never had any idea of such a similarity.

He saw again the gratings, bolts, and iron bars, to guard whom? Angels.

The lofty walls which he had seen around tigers he saw again around lambs.

It was a place of expiation, and not of punishment, and yet it was even more austere, more gloomy, and more pitiless than the other. These virgins were more harshly bowed than the galley slaves. A cold, harsh wind, the wind which had chilled his youth, blew through the barred and padlocked cage of the vultures; a north wind still more sharp and biting beat upon the cote of these doves. Why?

When he thought of these things, all within him bowed down before this mystery of sublimity.

In these meditations pride vanished. He reverted in many ways to himself; he felt himself insignificant, and wept many times. All that had entered his life during the past six months, led him back to the bishop's holy injunctions; Cosette by love, the convent by humility.

At times, in the evening, at twilight, the hour when the garden was deserted, he might have been seen kneeling in the middle of the

walk at the side of the chapel before that window through which he had gazed on the night of his arrival, turned towards the place where he knew that the sister who was making reparation was prostrate in prayer. He prayed thus kneeling before this sister.

It seemed as if he dared not kneel directly to God.

All that surrounded him, this peaceful garden, these fragrant flowers, these children uttering merry cries, these grave and simple women, this silent cloister, slowly penetrated him, and gradually his soul was composed of silence like this cloister, of perfume like these flowers, of peace like this garden, of simplicity like these women, and of joy like these children. And then he thought how two houses of God had in turn received him at the two critical moments of his life, the first when all doors were closed and human society repulsed him, the second at the moment when human society was beginning to hunt him down again, and the hulks were again opening; and that, had it not been for the former, he would have fallen back into crime, and but for the latter, into punishment.

All his heart melted into gratitude, and he loved more and more.

Several years passed thus; Cosette grew.

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